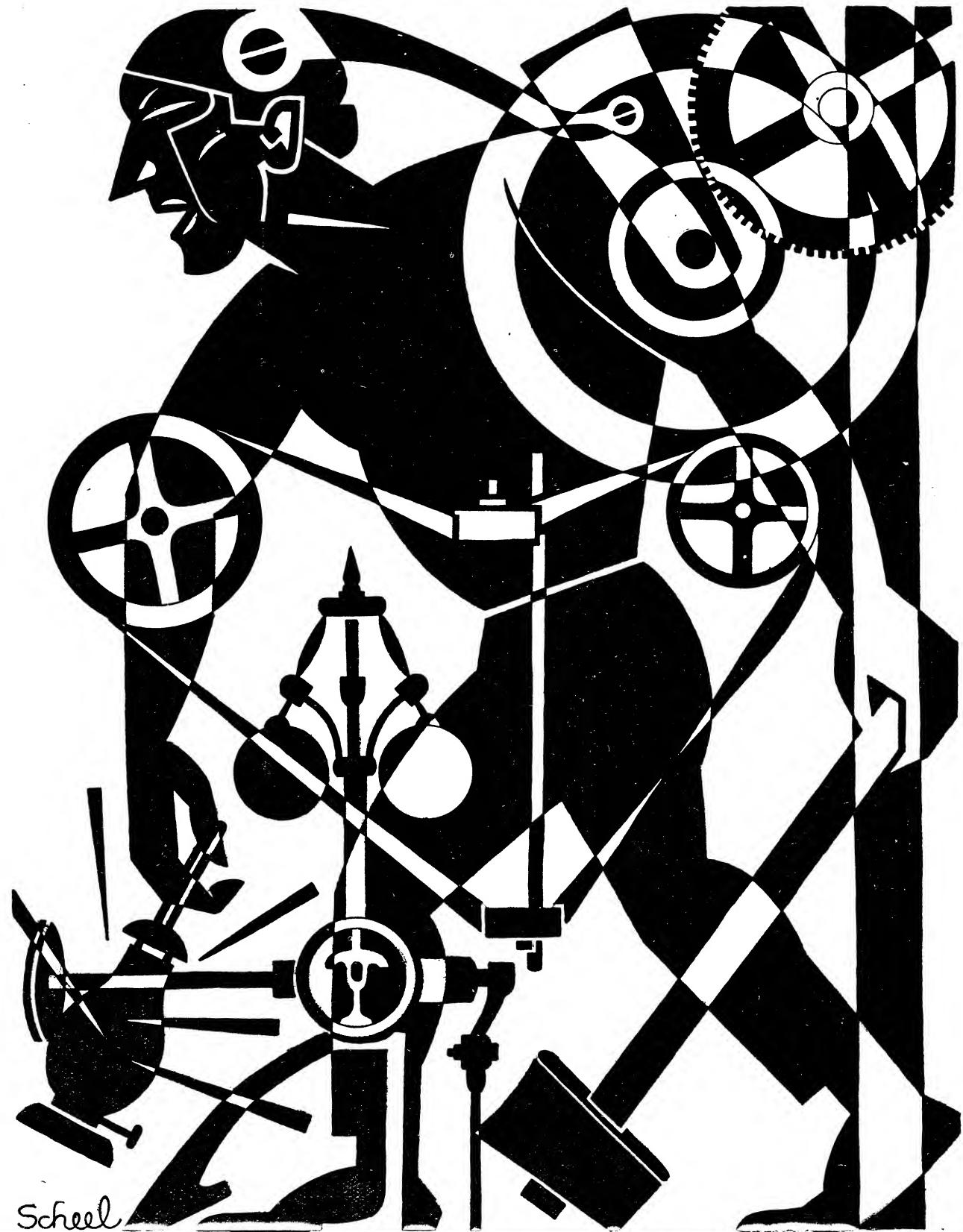


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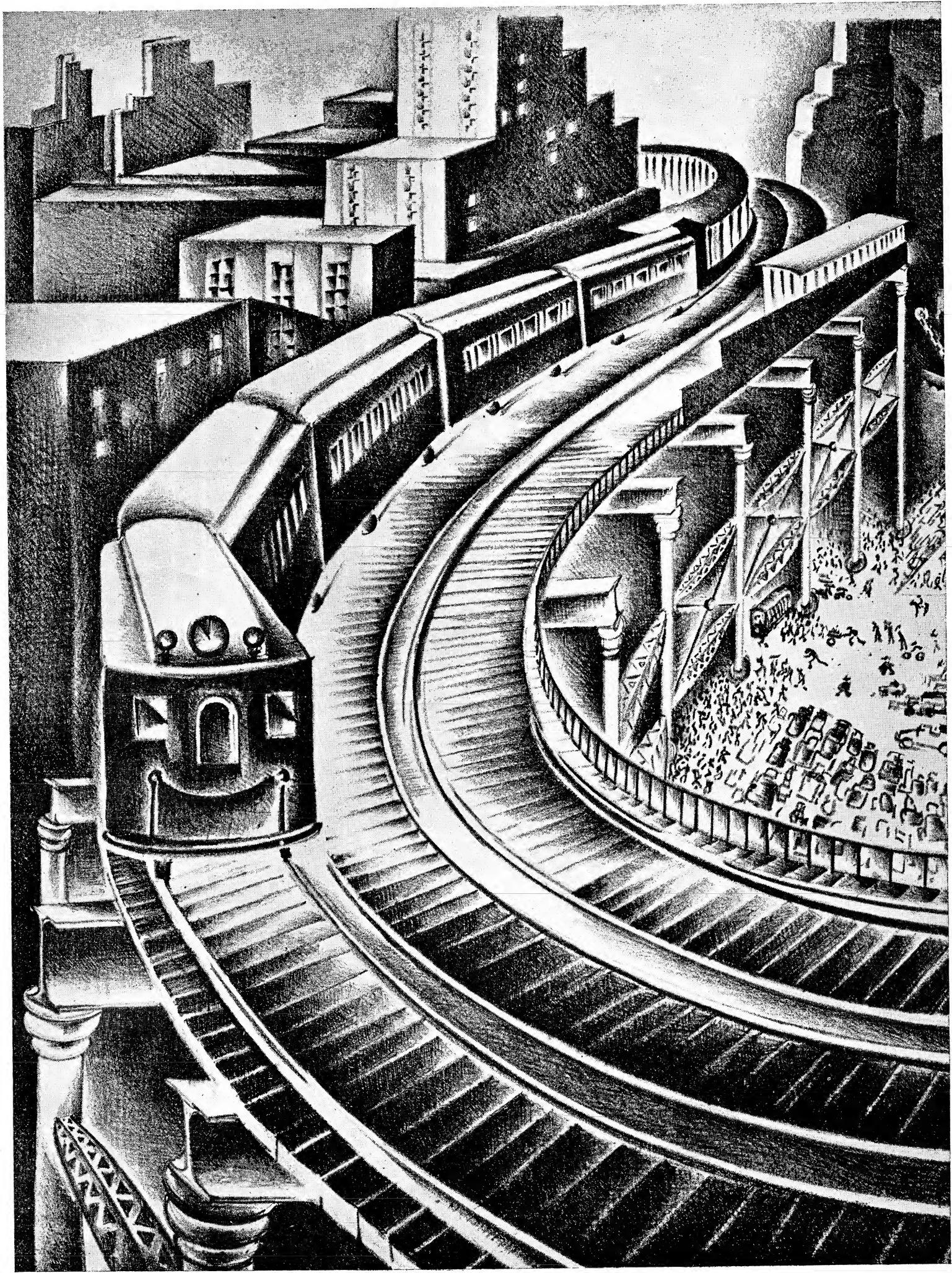
MASSES

JANUARY, 1930

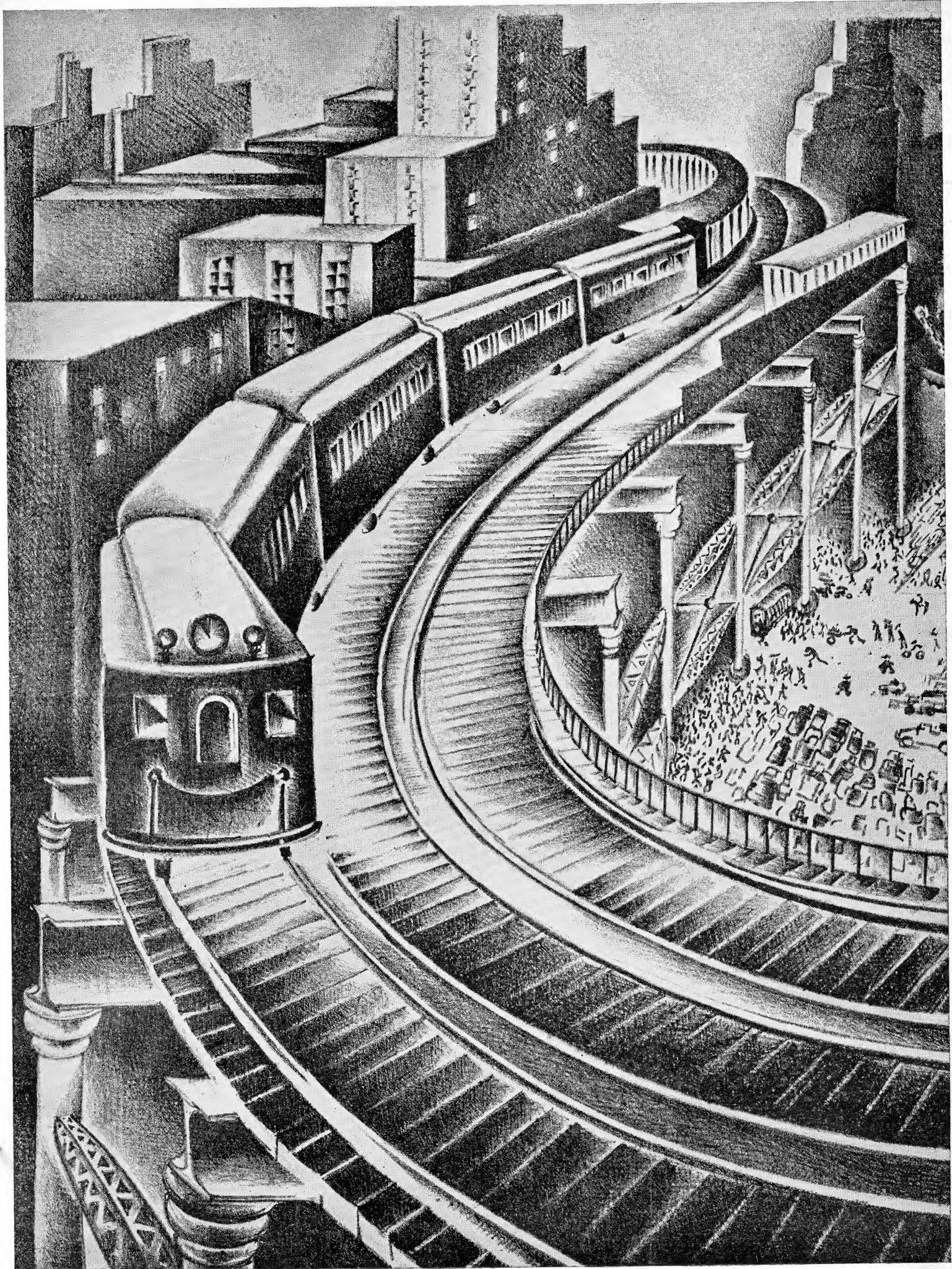
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NEW MASSES

VOLUME 5

JANUARY, 1930

NUMBER 8

MICHAEL GOLD, *Editor*

357

WALT CARMON, *Managing Editor*

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS: Harbor Allen, Egmont Arens, Cornelia Barns, Em Jo Basshe, Carlton Beals, Van Wyck Brooks, Howard Brubaker, Stanley Burnshaw, Stuart Chase, Miguel Covarrubias, Adolph Dehn, Robert Dunn, John Dos Passos, Waldo Frank, Joseph Freeman, Wanda Gag, Hugo Gellert, Arturo Giovannitti, William Gropper, Charles Yale Harrison, Joseph Kalar, Freda Kirchwey, Gan Kolski, Louis Lozowick, I. Klein, John Howard Lawson, H. H. Lewis, Norman Macleod, Claude McKay, Lewis Mumford, Scott Nearing, Samuel Ornitz, Lola Ridge, Boardman Robinson, James Rorty, Martin Russak, William Siegel, Upton Sinclair, Bernard Smith, Otto Soglow, Herman Spector, Rex Stout, Genevieve Taggard, Mary Heaton Vorse, Keene Wallis, Eric Walrond, Edmund Wilson, Jr., Robert Wolf, Art Young.

Published monthly by NEW MASSES, Inc., Office of publication 112 E. 19 St., New York. Copyright, 1929, by NEW MASSES, Inc., Reg. U. S. Patent Office. Drawings and text may not be reprinted without permission. Entered as second class matter, June 24, 1926, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Subscribers are notified that no change of address can be effected in less than a month. The NEW MASSES is a co-operative venture. It does not pay for contributions. Subscription \$1.50 a year in U. S. and Colonies and Mexico. Foreign \$2.00. Canada, \$2.50. Single Copies, 15 cents.

AMERICAN PORTRAITS

By JOHN DOS PASSOS

Emperor of the Caribbean

When Minor C. Keith died all the newspapers carried his picture, a brighteyed man with a hawknose and a respectable bay-window, why that uneasy look under the eyes?

Minor C. Keith was a rich man's son, born in a family that liked the smell of money, they could smell money half way round the globe in that family.

His Uncle was Henry Meiggs, the Don Enrique of the West Coast. His father had a big lumber business and handled real estate in Brooklyn.

Young Keith was a chip of the old block

(Back in 49 Don Enrique had been drawn to San Francisco by the gold rush. He didn't go prospecting in the hills, he didn't die of thirst sifting alkali dust in Death Valley. He sold outfit to the other guys. He stayed in San Francisco and played politics and high finance until he got in too deep and had to get aboard ship in a hurry.

The vessel took him to Chile. He could smell money in Chile.

He was the capitalista yanqui. He'd build the railroad from Santiago to Valparaiso. There were guano deposits on the Chincha islands. Meiggs could smell money in guano. He dug himself a fortune out of guano, became a power on the West Coast, juggled figures, railroads, armies, the politics of the local cauciques and politicos; they were all chips in a huge pokergame.

Behind a big hand he heaped up the dollars.

He financed the unbelievable Andean railroads.)

When Tomas Guardia got to be dictator of Costa Rica he wrote to Don Enrique to build him a railroad;

Meiggs was busy in the Andes, a 75,000 dollar contract was hardly worth his while,

so he sent for his nephew Minor Keith.

They didn't let grass grow under their feet in that family: at sixteen Minor Keith had been on his own, selling collars and ties in a clothingstore.

After he was a lumber surveyor and ran a lumber business.

When his father bought Padre Island off Corpus Christi Texas he sent Minor down to make money out of it.

Minor Keith started raising cattle on Padre Island and seining for fish,

but cattle and fish didn't turn over money fast enough so he bought hogs and chopped up the steers and boiled the meat and fed it to the hogs and chopped up the fish and fed it to the hogs,

but hogs didn't turn over money fast enough, so he was glad to be off to Limon.

Limon was one of the worst pestholes on the Caribbean, even the Indians died there of malaria, yellow jack, dysentery.

Keith went back up to New Orleans on the steamer John G. Meiggs to hire workers to build the railroad. He offered a dollar a day and grub and hired seven hundred men. Some of them had been down before in the filibustering days of William Walker.

Of that bunch about twentyfive came out alive.

The rest left their whiskey carcasses to rot in the swamps.

On another load he shipped down fifteen hundred; they all died to prove that only Jamaica Negros could live in Limon.

Minor Keith didn't die.

In 1882 there were twenty miles of railroad built and Keith was a million dollars in the hole.

The railroad had nothing to haul.

Keith made them plant bananas so that the railroad might have something to haul, to market the bananas he had to go into the shipping business;

this was the beginning of the Caribbean fruittrade.

All the while the workers died of whiskey, malaria, yellow jack, dysentery.

Minor Keith's three brothers died.

Minor Keith didn't die.

He built railroads, opened retail stores up and down the coast in Bluefields, Belize, Limon, bought and sold rubber, vanilla, tortoiseshell, sarsparilla, anything he could buy cheap he bought, anything he could sell dear he sold.

In 1898 in cooperation with the Boston Fruit Company he formed the United Fruit Company that has since become one of the most powerful industrial units in the world.

In 1912 he incorporated the International Railroads of Central America;

all of it built out of bananas;

in Europe and the United States people had started to eat bananas,

so they cut down the jungles through Central America to plant bananas,

and built railroads to haul the bananas,

and every year more steamboats of the Great White Fleet steamed north loaded with bananas,

and that is the history of the American empire in the Caribbean,

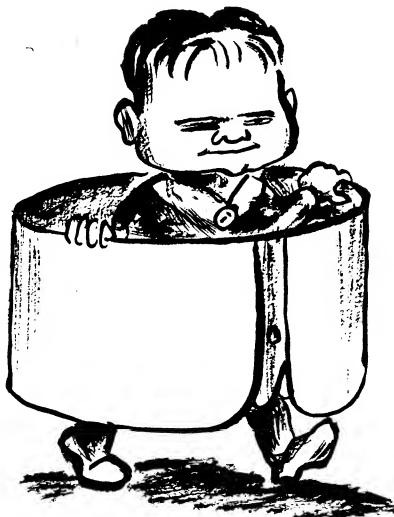
except for the Panama canal and the future Nicaragua canal and the marines and the battleships and the bayonets,

Why that uneasy look under the eyes, in the picture of Minor

OUR WHITE-COLLAR PRESIDENT— Drawn by I. Klein



TWO MONTHS OLD



THREE YEARS



SCHOOL DAYS

C. Keith the pioneer of the fruit trade, the railroad builder, in all the pictures the newspapers carried of him when he died?

Proteus

Steinmetz was a hunchback son of a hunchback lithographer. He was born in Breslau in 1865, graduated with highest honors at seventeen from the Breslau Gymnasium, went to the University of Breslau to study Mathematics; mathematics to Steinmetz was muscular strength and long walks over the hills and the kiss of a girl in love and big evenings spent swilling beer with your friends; on his broken back he felt the topheavy weight of society the way workingmen felt it on their straight backs, the way poor students felt it, was a member of a socialist club, editor of a paper called the People's Voice.

Bismarck was sitting in Berlin like a big paperweight to keep the new Germany feudal, to hold down the empire for his bosses the Hohenzollerns.

Steinmetz had to run off to Zurich for fear of going to jail; at Zurich his mathematics woke up all the professors at the polytechnic;

but Europe in the eighties was no place for a penniless German student with a broken back and a big head filled with symbolic calculus and wonder about electricity that is mathematics made power and a socialist at that.

With a Danish friend he sailed for America steerage on an old French line boat La Champagne,

lived in Brooklyn at first and commuted to Yonkers where he had a \$12 a week job with Rudolph Eichemeyer who was a German exile from 48 an inventor and electrician and owner of a factory where he made hatmaking machinery and electrical generators.

In Yonkers he worked out the theory of the Third Harmonics and the law of hysteresis which states in a formula the hundredfold relations between the metallic heat, density, frequency when the poles change places in the core of a magnet under an alternating current.

It is Steinmetz's law of Hysteresis that makes possible all the transformers that crouch in little boxes and gableroofed houses in all the hightension lines allover everywhere. The mathematical symbols of Steinmetz's law are the patterns of all transformers everywhere.

In 1892 when Eichemeyer sold out to the corporation that was to form the General Electric, Steinmetz was entered in the contract along with other valuable apparatus. All his life Steinmetz was a piece of apparatus belonging to the General Electric.

First his laboratory was at Lynn then it was moved and the little hunchback with it to Schenectady the electric city.

General Electric humored him, let him be a socialist, let him

keep a greenhouseful of cactuses lit up by mercury lights, let him have alligators, talking crows and a gila monster for a pet and the publicity department talked up the wizard, the medicine man who knew the symbols that opened up the doors of Ali Baba's cave.

Steinmetz jotted a formula on his cuff and next morning a thousand new powerplants had sprung up and the dynamos sang dollars and the silence of the transformers was all dollars.

and the Publicity department poured oily stories into the ears of the American public every Sunday and Steinmetz became the little parlor magician,

who made a toy thunderstorm in his laboratory and made all the toy trains run on time and the meat stay cold in the icebox and the lamp in the parlor and the great lighthouses and the searchlights and the revolving beams of light that guide airplanes at night towards Chicago, New York, St. Louis, Los Angeles,

and they let him be a socialist and believe that human society could be improved the way you can improve a dynamo and they let him be pro-German and write a letter offering his services to Lenin because mathematicians are so impractical who make up formulas by which you can build powerplants, factories, subway systems, light, heat, air, sunshine but not human relations that affect the stockholders' money and the directors' salaries.

Steinmetz was a famous magician and he talked to Edison tapping with the morse code on Edison's knee

because Edison was so very deaf

and he went out West

to make speeches that nobody understood

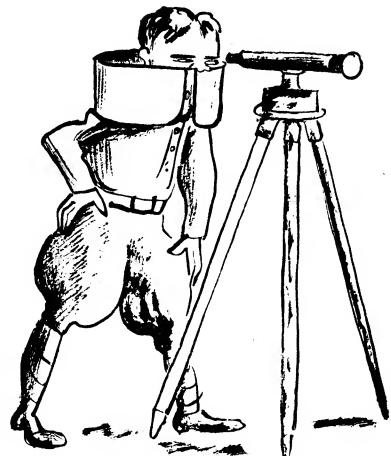
and he talked to Bryan about God on a railroad train and all the reporters stood round while he and Einstein

met face to face,

but they couldn't catch what they said

and Steinmetz was the most valuable piece of apparatus the General Electric had

until he wore out and died.



THE YOUNG ENGINEER

OUR WHITE-COLLAR PRESIDENT—

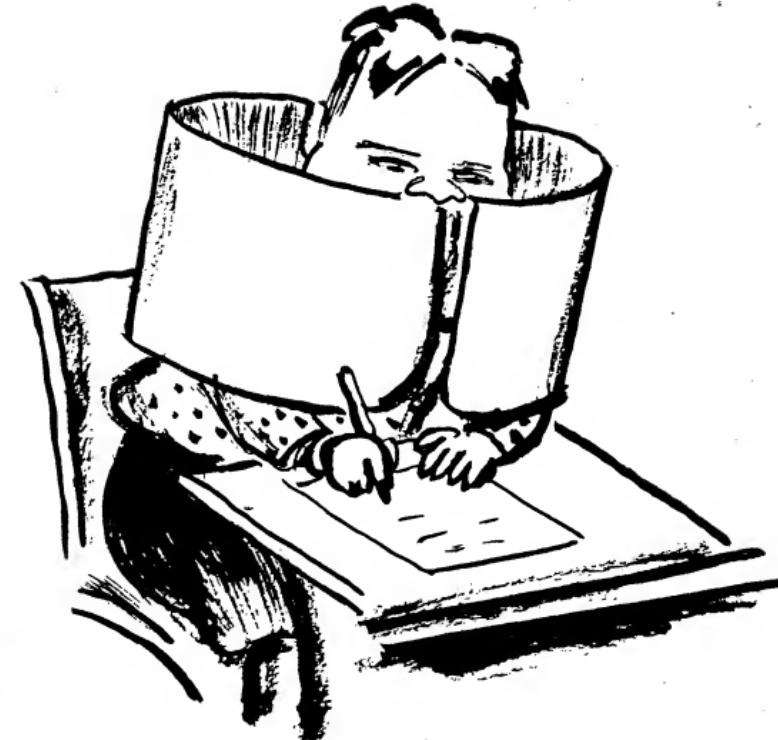
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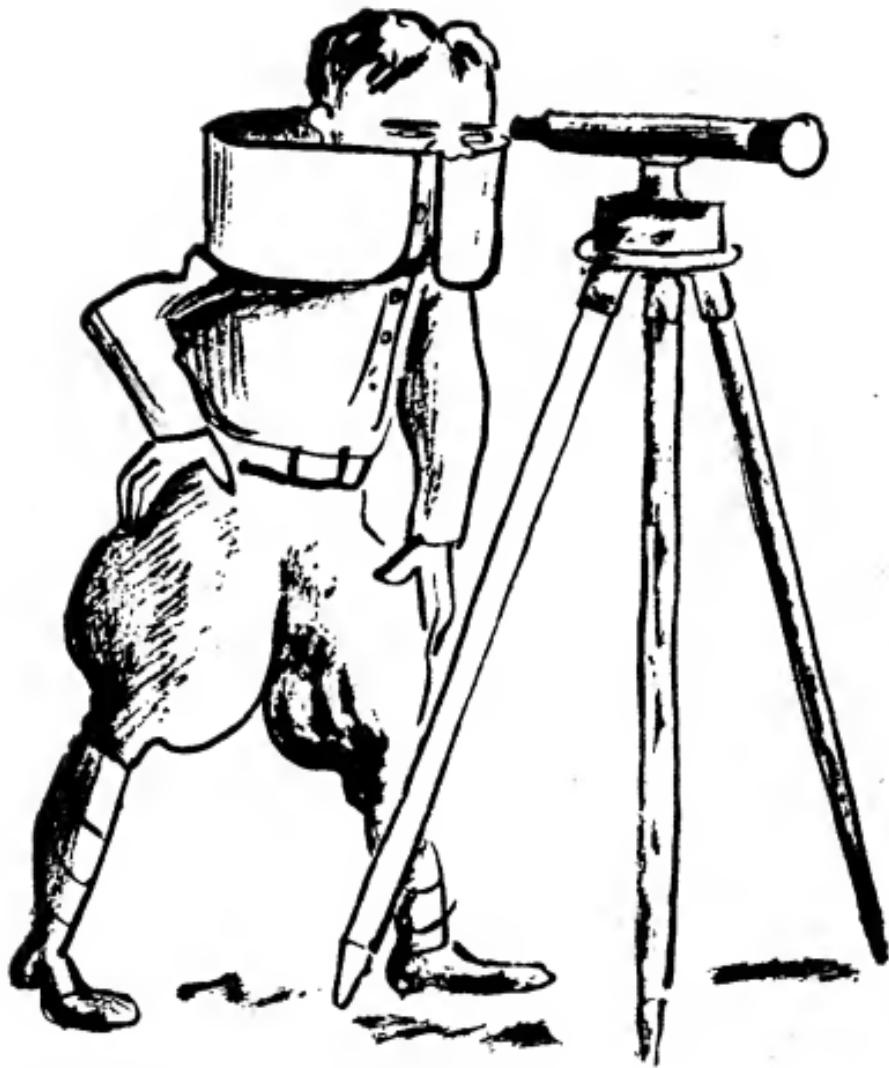
TWO MONTHS OLD



THREE YEARS



SCHOOL DAYS



THE YOUNG ENGINEER

The Boy Orator Of the Platte

It was in the Chicago Convention in '96 that the prizewinning boy orator the minister's son whose lips had never touched liquor let out his silver voice so that it filled the gigantic hall filled the ears of the plain people

Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the convention:

I would be presumptuous indeed

to present myself against

the distinguished gentlemen to whom you have listened, if this were a mere measuring of abilities;

but this is not a contest between persons.

*The humblest citizen in all the land,
when clad in the armor of a righteous cause,
is stronger than all the hosts of error.*

I come to speak to you in defence of a cause as holy as the cause of Liberty . . .

a youngish bigmouthed man in a white tie
barnstormer, exhorter, evangelist

his voice charmed the mortgagerridden farmers of the great plains, rang through weatherboarded schoolhouses in the Missouri Valley, was sweet in the ears of small storekeepers hungry for easy credit, melted men's innards like the song of a thrush in the grey quiet before sunup, or a sudden soar in winter wheat or a bugler playing taps and the flag flying.

Silver tongue of the plain people.

the man who is employed for wages is as much a business man as his employer;

the attorney in a country town is as much a business man as the corporation counsel in a great metropolis;

the merchant in a crossroads store is as much a business man as the merchant of New York;



OUR PRESIDENT

I. KLEIN

the farmer who goes forth in the morning and toils all day, who begins in the spring and toils all summer, and who by the application of brain and muscle to the natural resources of the country creates wealth, is as much a business man as the man who goes upon the board of trade and bets upon the price of grain;

the miners who go down a thousand feet in the earth or climb two thousand feet upon the cliffs and bring forth from their hidingplaces

*the precious metals
to be poured in the channels of trade,
are as much business men
as the few financial magnates
who
in a back room
corner the money of the world.*

The hired man and the country attorney sat up and listened, this was big talk for the farmer who'd mortgaged his crop to buy fertilizer, big talk for the small town hardware man, groceryman, feed and corn merchant, undertaker, truckgardener

Having behind us

the producing masses

*of this nation and the world,
supported by the commercial interests, the laboring interests
and the toilers everywhere,
we will answer*

*their demand
for a gold standard*

by saying to them

You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns,

You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.

They roared their lungs out

crown of thorns and cross of gold

carried him round the hall on their shoulders, hugged him, loved him, named their children after him, nominated him for president,

boy orator of the Platte,

silver tongue of the plain people.

But McArthur and Forrest, two Scotchmen in the Rand, had invented the cyanide process for extracting gold from ore, South Africa flooded the gold market; there was no need for a prophet of silver.

The silver tongue chanted on out of the big mouth, chanting Pacifism, Prohibition, Fundamentalism
nibbling radishes on the lecture platform
drinking grapejuice and water
gorging big cornbelt meals

Bryan grew grey in the hot air of Chautauqua tents, in the applause, the handshakes, the backpatting, the cigarmoky air of committee rooms at Democratic conventions, a silver tongue in a big mouth.

In Dayton he dreamed of turning the trick again, of setting back the clocks for the plain people, branding, flaying, making a big joke

of Darwinism and the unbelieving outlook of city folks, scientists, foreigners with beards and monkey morals

In Florida he'd spoken every day at noon on a float under an awning selling lots for Coral Gables . . . he had to speak to feel the drawling voices hush, feel the tense approving ears, the gust of handclaps

Why not campaign again through the length and breadth to set up again the tottering word for the plain people who wanted the plain word of God?

crown of thorns and cross of gold
the plain prosperous comfortable word of God for plain prosperous comfortable midamerican folks?

He was a big eater. It was hot. A stroke killed him.

Three days later down in Florida the company delivered the electric horse he'd ordered to exercise on when he'd seen the electric horse the President exercised on in the White House.



OUR PRESIDENT

L. KLEIN



Drawn by Theodor Scheel.

V. I. LENIN .. APRIL 23, 1870-JAN. 21, 1924 ..

"Art belongs to the people. Art must have its deepest roots in the vast creative masses. It must be understood and loved by the masses. Art must organize the feeling, thought and will of the masses . . . let us always have the workers and peasants in mind. For their sake let us learn economics and arithmetic; let us develop in the field of art and culture."

Notes of the Month

By MICHAEL GOLD

Dramatic Critics—My remarks about N. Y. dramatic critics in this column last month brought a few pale drops of blood from some of those gentlemen. Their comments were typical. Mr. Busybody Winchell answered with an epigram: "Ah, nuts!" A writer in *Zit's Weekly* proved as brilliant. His comment was: "Hooey, Mr. Gold, hooey!" Robert Garland on the *Telegram*, a musical comedy scholar, demonstrated profoundly that I had praised J. Brooks Atkinson of the *Times* because Mr. Atkinson had said some friendly things about my play. These answers have convinced me that there is a burning need for someone to organize a League to Abolish Dramatic Critics.

They serve no useful purpose that I can see. The commercial managers certainly do not want them. When a man has sunk \$20,000 in a play, he can afford nothing but a favorable attitude in the press toward his gamble. The newspaper owners certainly want to give this to him in exchange for his advertising, but cannot always control their critics.

A solution would be if the publicity agents of the various plays were to write the dramatic criticisms for the newspapers to print. This reform could easily be effected by the commercial managers. Let them band together and threaten to withdraw their advertising if it is not done. It is sure to be done.

Serious and worth-while plays that occasionally risk a trip through the Broadway stockyards have never been helped by the dramatic critics, and will manage to exist without them.

New Playwrights—When we founded the New Playwrights' Theatre, I insisted from the start that no dramatic critics be permitted within our doors. I knew what they would do to any new, uncrystallized venture like ours. I was overruled by the other playwrights, with the result that for a year and a half we were submitted to a crossfire of banal, venomous, personal abuse. Each month we were forced to read banal irrelevances as to how uncomfortable our seats were, and how amateurish and unlike *Abie's Irish Rose* in structure and intent were our plays.

Never a word of mature blame, praise or advice. We were not Ibsens or Gorkys, God knows, but we were working in that tradition. The critics judged us in the tradition of George Jean Nathan and the musical comedies. Result: they wiped us out. They have recently wiped out the Provincetown Players and the Irish Players. Every other group of this kind that lifts its head will meet the same fate unless it locks its doors against the critics for the first three years of its experimentation. The Provincetown Players managed to build a Eugene O'Neill theatre only by refusing admission to the critics for years.

The Long View—None of these critics seem to have the creative eye. None of them seems to have retained enough his youth to understand that there is more enduring worth in a chaotic sketch by Sean O'Casey than in all the cream-puff perfections of a Noel Coward or Preston Sturges. They haven't the long view. They haven't any view but that of box-office. They are jaded, corrupt boulevardiers. The majority of them have never seen a play out of New York, or read a history of the theatre. They are ignorant, weary men. They hate their jobs; they hate the theatre. They have no courage. Noisy bell-wethers like the fat Alexander Woolcott or the chorus-girlish G. J. Nathan have always intimidated them. They have little individuality; read one, and you have read all. They are a shallow clique, but the beginning playwright must run their gauntlet.

It is better not to write plays in America.

Or the way out for a revolutionary playwright is to join in building up some kind of Workers' Theatre that will keep itself free of these Broadway critics, and their Broadway theatres, managers, and audiences.

This has been done in England, Germany, Japan, Czecho-Slovakia and other countries; it can be done here. The future belongs to the workers' theatres; the rest have begun to stink of the inevitable grave.

Hell on the Hudson—I was born and raised in New York, but hate the town. So does everyone else who has to live in it. We live here because we are fascinated by it in the way a coke-fiend is drawn to his poison. Or we have to make our living here. New York is a monstrosity born out of the capitalist system. It has no sound economic base for existence. One of the first acts of a workers revolution would be to de-centralize New York. The city would inevitably shrink to man-size under a co-operative social order. Those dreamy-eyed architects and Parisian futurists who gloat over skyscrapers and love to imagine a city of nothing but vast skyscrapers and five or six street levels, etc., are not only foolish but ignorant. They are fools because human beings cannot permanently live in this kind of artificial prison. They are ignorant because they do not see that skyscrapers are made necessary only by capitalist competition, and simply will not be useful in a real civilization; the workers' Republic.

As I write, I can hear the riveters clattering next door on a new skyscraper. The bedlam has been going on for weeks. It is the harsh, cruel song of New York. It poisons the sleep of thousands of people, pulls down their health. There are few healthy people in New York. It is almost impossible to bring up children here. The workers who must jam the subways twice a day certainly have no desire for a more futuristic New York. No one in hell longs for hotter flames. Yet New York remains the most interesting city in America. It has a revolutionary spirit. Its workers have always been the vanguard of the labor movement. Its intellectuals have been less provincial than the book-readers in the rest of America. Why must hell always be more interesting than heaven? Just the same, I would give all the skyscrapers in New York for a chance to be fishing now, or to be riding a good horse up the side of a Mexican mountain.



Drawn by Theodor Scheel.

V. I. LENIN .. APRIL 23, 1870-JAN. 21, 1924 ..

"Art belongs to the people. Art must have its deepest roots in the vast creative masses. It must be understood and loved by the masses. Art must organize the feeling, thought and will of the masses . . . let us always have the workers and peasants in mind. For their sake let us learn economics and arithmetic; let us develop in the field of art and culture."



Solidarity—Stand by the seven men of Gastonia.

Drawn by Hugo Gellert.

The London Conference—The diplomats are meeting in London next month for another discussion on disarmament. Which means we are another step nearer the next world-war. Duellists always confer before battle, and choose their weapons. Battleships are outmoded; the international duellists are trying to effect an agreement to fight with airplanes and submarines. It is a means of modernizing their armaments, not abolishing them. It is a means of stabilizing capitalism by cutting down the tax-rate. There have been many such conferences. This time the chief comedian is Ramsay MacDonald. The British Empire is sinking. He is trying to save it by an alliance with America against Europe. The British imperial fleet is in the way. He is willing to sacrifice it and offers parity to America. How blind is the human race, not to hear under all the fine disarmament phrases the big guns of the next war! The old diplomacy is out of favor; the new diplomacy has learned to speak the pious vague Ramsayan rhetoric. It leads to mass-murder just the same. It is quite possible that the Christian bellwether of the next world war will be this same Ramsay. He is another Woodrow Wilson. He is being adored by the same people who killed Germans in the last war for such beautiful liberal reasons. Ramsay, whose government shoots down workers in India, Egypt, China, whose aviators bomb native villages in Mesopotamia and Africa! Ramsay, prince of peace, and king of an empire of slaves! Does anyone imagine England could hold its empire without guns, or that Ramsay wants give up that empire?

This is a conference, not to abolish armament, but to abolish obsolete armament. It is also a conference whose subtle, unexpressed object is to form new alliances for the next world war. Watch it.

Prohibition—The Volstead act is a joke, of course. No one respects it, no one obeys it. It will inevitably be modified. We will be drinking in public again, instead of from the hip. Good. But what of it? What makes the liberal journalists so emotional about Prohibition? It is this theme alone that snaps the hard-boiled Mr. Mencken out of his universal cynicism, and makes him write with the passion and pathos of a Danton. It is this subject that infuriates the mild, whimsical Heywood Broun so that he begins shouting of barricades and red flags. It is the one subject the liberal intellectuals of America feel most intensely and personally. We others are being constantly amazed by their antics. Can gin be so important to an intellectual? They call us fanatics when we protest against the suppression of Haiti, or the industrial barbarities in the south, or the corrupt leadership in the A. F. of L. But do we rant half as much about these serious matters as they do over gin? Really, it's enough to turn one into a Prohibitionist. There's something faintly silly about the man who can

remain Olympian when coal miners are being shot down by State troopers, but who suddenly bursts into flaming revolt because his gin is censored. Let's have the gin, if possible, but let's not mistake a bottle of Gordon Dry for the Holy Grail. The thing has become a burlesque. Imagine an army of idealists, marching as to war behind their shuffling, big-footed but noble-hearted General H. Broun. Their eyes shine with the spirit of sacrifice. Their throats are parched, but they sing their sacred battle-hymn as they go: "How Dry I Am." The drums beat, the brasses blow, and above the bristling ranks of bayonets floats a banner with a strange device: "We Want Our Gin!"

It's funny, that's all. If one must fight Prohibition, one ought do it humorously. No solemn crusade can be arranged for such a cause. Even the kids would laugh.

The repeal of the Volstead act will not change America by a single fundamental. Hoover will still be in the White House, miners will still die of black-damp and government bullets, two million children will still be slaving in cotton mills and beet fields, forty million wage workers will still be earning yachts, pearls and Park avenue apartments for their bosses.

Europe has no Volstead act, but the masses of common people suffer under the same economic slavery as they do here. One can drink gin in England at every streetcorner, but two million unemployed haven't had the price of a pint of bitters for over ten years.

Let's not be trivial.

Literature—Fiction and poetry are two forms of literature that are slowly dying to-day. One does not need to theorize; a glance at any publisher's list confirms the fact. With the growth of the scientific attitude, people are beginning to feel that reality is more miraculous and romantic than all the inventions of the novelists and poets.

It is not materialism that does it. The speculations of Einstein contain more of the sublime, certainly, than whole mountains of Love lyrics, with their feeble biological obsessions.

Facts are the new poetry. The proletarian writer will cut away from the stale plots, love stories, ecstasies and verbal heroisms of the fictionists of the past. He will work with facts. Facts are his strength. Facts are his passion. He will not worry too much about form. Facts create their own new form. Aeroplanes are beautiful, but not because some artist planned this beauty. Utility created it.

Utility, propaganda, will create a beauty of form in the proletarian poems, plays and novels of the future. In Soviet Russia this is already true. The great Russian films are all propaganda films built up on significant facts,

JANUARY, 1930

7



Solidarity—Stand by the seven men of Gastonia.

Drawn by Hugo Gellert.

JANUARY, 1930

7



Solidarity—Stand by the seven men of Gastonia.

Drawn by Hugo Gellert.

IT SOUNDS FUNNY NOW

By KENNETH FEARING

They picked me up about seven o'clock on Monday night, I and the two fellows that was with me. The dicks didn't say what they wanted us for, they just took us down to the station and ran us in, booked for vagrancy. That didn't look so hot, of course, but it didn't look so bad either. I had some jack in my pants, proving I wasn't no vag, so I figured at the worst they'd fine me and throw me out of town. And then, Holy Christ, it turned out what they wanted us for was some job in a restaurant. There was a wop restaurant where these two birds used to hang out, with the rest of their gang, and somebody broke in there Sunday night and cracked the safe. The wop had it on his brain the job was pulled by somebody in this gang, which was probably true, and the dicks were just as positive. Well, I heard them talking about it but I still wasn't worried much, because I wasn't really a part of this mob, I'd just gone around to the restaurant three or four times with these other two fellows to eat. But they were there all the time.

And then, Holy Christ, the wop showed up at the station that night and he couldn't remember these other two birds at all, but he put the finger on me. So there I was, between the guts and the sweat. And the dicks didn't waste no time, they started to work out on me right away. They took me into the back room as soon as the wop was gone. I remember, hell, it sounds funny now, I was walking out of the room, and one of the dicks caught me on the back of the neck, a sweet one.

"Well, come on, good-looking," he yells, and wham! I nearly did a nose dive into that back room. Right then I started to get worried.

They shoved me down in a chair and the dicks, there was four of them, stood around in a circle, one of them sitting in a chair facing me. And there was a little guy at a desk over to one side.

"Well, how about it?" One of the dicks started off with some crack like that.

"How about what?" I said.

"Listen, Jack," that dick must have been at least seven feet tall, "I hope you don't think you're tough? We like tough mugs. Don't we, Mike?" Oh, Jesus, you should've heard the chorus! They'd rather have a tough mug to play with than drink beer. There was grins on their pans a mile wide. "Now listen, Jack," he got sort of confidential and friendly. "We don't want to shellac you unless you're so dumb there's nothing else to do. But if you think you're tough, just say so, and we'll show you different."

"No," I said, "I don't think I'm tough."

"Then that's all right," said the dick. "Show us you're a right guy and we'll be easy on you. See?"

"Sure," I said, "I ain't tough."

"All right, then," said the dick. "Now, how about it?"

"How about what?" I said. Of all the dumb remarks, that was about the dumbest I could've pulled. But I couldn't think of nothing else, at the time, it just popped out. The dick in front of me pulled out his night-stick and banged me on the knee, a sweet one. I put out my hand, sort of rubbing the knee, and he cracked down on my hand so hard I thought it was broke, sure as hell, and I nearly passed out.

"How about that restaurant job?" says one of the dicks.

"What restaurant job?" I says.

"Say, you," says the dick, and he sounded sore as hell, "didn't I tell you what'd happen if you tried to get hard?"

"I ain't hard," I says, "But I don't know what you're talking about. You pulled me in here, I got the once-over by some wop out front, but I ain't even heard the charges."

"Read this dumb yap the charge," says the dick to the clerk, and he sounded kind of restless and impatient. "Maybe he ain't sure which job of his we got on him." So the little guy at the desk leaned forward and read from a paper.

"You, Thomas Halprin—" and then there was a lot of words winding up with I was charged with having burglariously, or whatever you call it, broke into this wop's restaurant and cracked his box for about two hundred bucks.

"Who," I says, when the bird finished, "me?" I know it must've sounded dumb and funny as hell, but I couldn't help it. I was still trying to figure out what it was all about. Well, I was looking at the clerk when I said that, and the dick on the other side of me clipped me a nice one on the jaw.

"Yes, you," he says. "That means you. Nobody else."

I turned around and started to try to explain something, and a guy on the other side slammed me on the other side of the jaw. "How about it?" he says, and the dick in front was rapping me over the knee with that hunk of gas-pipe and every now and then just to join the chorus he'd yell, "Come on, you, how about it?"

"Listen," I said, "I don't know anything about it. I wasn't nowhere near that restaurant on Sunday night." Believe me, I was between the guts and the sweat. I was trying to do some fast thinking, but I didn't have no chance, and anyway, my head was spinning like a top.

"Where was you Sunday night?" They finally got down to that.

"At the hotel," I says, "the Davis." And I give them the name of the hotel I stayed at while I was in K. C. and said I was in bed all night.

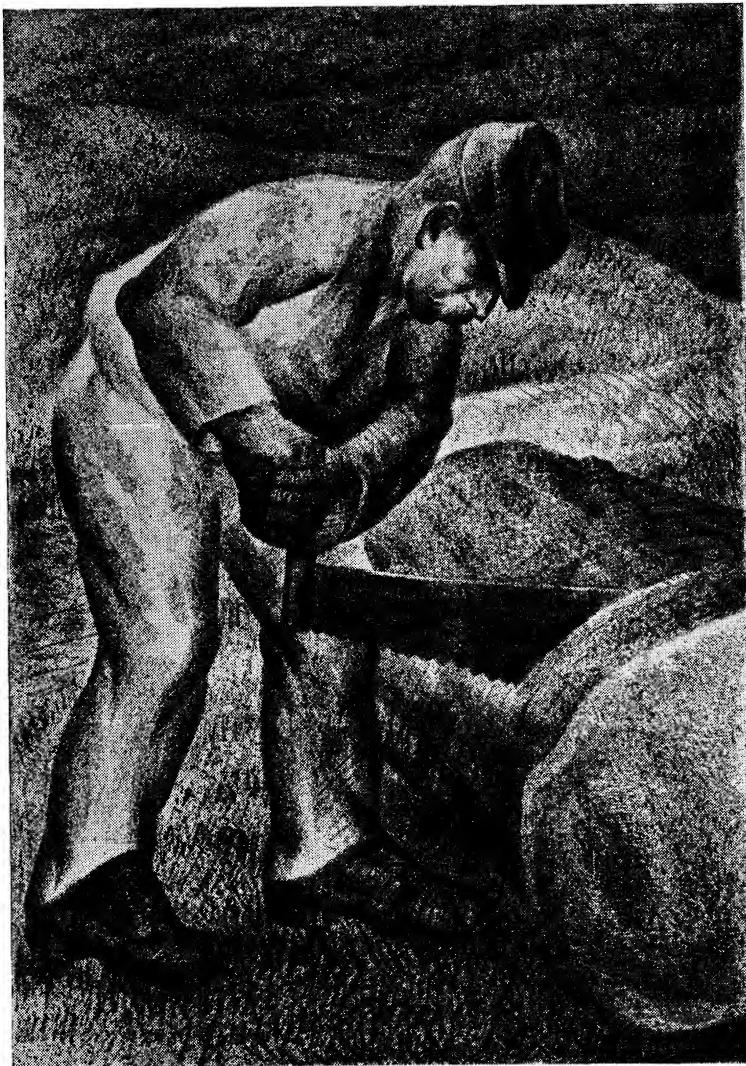
"The hell you were!" says one of the dicks. "The clerk says you didn't even come in Sunday night. Where was you?"

For about five minutes after that dumb crack of mine the air was full of nothing but elbows and jacks and thumbs, with them dicks yelling where was I Sunday night. With me trying to think of where to say I was. See, I couldn't say where I really was without getting a friend of mine and his girl into trouble. I remembered I stayed with them all Sunday night, and if I used that alibi everything would be jake for me, but it'd get this friend of mine into a hell of a jam. And I certainly skidded when I said I'd been at the hotel in bed, because as soon as they pulled me in they'd gone up there and talked to the night-clerk and searched my room. They didn't find nothing in the room, of course, but the clerk told them my key'd been in the rack all Sunday night. So that made it twice as bad, that slip of mine. The dicks was twice as positive I'd pulled the job. And I couldn't really explain.

I know it sounds funny as hell, now, but it wasn't so funny then. Of all the dumb remarks to make, I finally said I was out all Sunday night walking around, looking for a job. It certainly sounded phoney, looking for a job on Sunday night, but that was the best I could think of under the circumstances and I stuck to that. I don't remember all the rest of what happened at that first ball-game, but they finally had enough and two guys dragged me downstairs and threw me in the can. I had plenty to think about that night, but I wasn't in the mood for thinking. It was cold as hell down in that basement, I hadn't had nothing to eat since Monday noon, and my jaw was broke, I thought sure, to say nothing of my arms being about twisted off me. And there didn't look like any prospects of anything but a nice five year stretch at least on this phoney charge they thought they had me on, me without enough jack to beat the rap, no matter how bum it was. So I had a swell night. It's hard to explain the feeling, and it probably sounds funny, but when they get you like that you find out the meaning of fear. You're alone, you know, with no chance to get out. You could be bumped off in there and nobody be the wiser or give a damn, just a line somewhere, "Thomas Halprin, held on a charge of vagrancy, fell from a cell-bunk and died of a fractured skull." You know, you see it in the papers every day. You don't know what fear is until you've been in a jam like that.

You can feel every damn thing in the world against you, like a bunch of loaded rods pressed into your guts and the guys holding them itching to start blasting just for the fun of it. What the hell are you, anyway? Nothing. So I spent a swell night nursing that jaw and reflecting, as they say, on the errors of my ways. Which was mostly, the way I figured it, the error of not being in that hotel room of mine on Sunday night. Holy Christ, it must sound dumb and funny. But that's the way it was.

Every now and then, until pretty late that night, they'd drag in



Woodman

Lithograph by A. Z. Kruse

another guy the dicks'd been sapping up on upstairs. If I looked like any of them guys did I must've looked like something the cat dragged around a long time before he found a place to bury it. And I guess I looked the same, all right. My shirt had some blood on it and my clothes, it was a new suit I bought that morning, was tore in a couple places. But I remember they brought in a guy about forty years old and put him in a cell next to mine, and I got talking to him, about what sort of an alibi I should fix to get out of this place. This guy was a paroled prisoner himself, he'd only been out three or four months after a ten year stretch, and him and his gang got pulled in for swiping a load of furs. That was the charge. They'd caught them with the truckload, going somewhere, and can you imagine their dumb alibi? They'd found the truck, that's all. They'd just happened to be walking down the road and they found it. Well, anyway, I explained my case to this bird, I had to laugh, I could see he didn't believe it, he thought I really had pulled the job, but he said, stick to my alibi.

"Which'd you rather have," he says, "getting beat up four or five times, or ten years in the can? You don't know what they got on you. Maybe they got something, but probably they ain't got all they want, otherwise why would they bother to give you the works? Stick to your alibi, because that can't make you no worse off and there's a chance it'll spring you."

Well, that was good news, that I was liable to be sapped up a few more times. I'd thought I was all through with that and there was nothing more except to say good-morning judge. So that was something else to look forward to. And next morning, Holy Christ, every time I heard keys rattling or a door slam I was ready to kiss myself good-bye. There wasn't nothing to do except sit around and wait, of course. Along about noon the old

guy in the cell next to mine threw an entertainment of his own. He waited till the prison doctor come around, with an attendant, and started to throw a fit, yelling his head off. All the guys hollered for the doc to come and find out what was the matter with this bird and shut him off. So the doc asked him if he was in pain, and the mug said Oh, hell, he was dying with pain. They made up their minds it must be appendicitis, and I guess in another minute they would have yanked it out on the spot, but the old bird finally stops moaning long enough to say to the doc, "I know what's the matter with me, doctor." They asked him what, and he said, in a kind of dying voice that sounded funny as hell, "I am the victim of a drug habit, doctor." But it didn't work, of course, because it made the doc sore. In another minute that old boy was the victim of a special party he wasn't expecting, besides the drug habit. And after that there wasn't nothing to do but go right on waiting.

Finally it got so bad I begun wishing they'd come around and drag me out for anything, even another picnic upstairs in the back room. And them station-house screws didn't make it better, they're like nobody else in the world. They're the lowest bunch of rats in the world, I guess. At noon one of them came up to the door and said how would I like some beef stew and java, for instance. So naturally I hopped up to the bars, with my mouth open and my tongue hanging out. I suppose they got to pull stunts like that to pass the time away. It was water and some stale bread. And another one come around, and when I asked him what're the chances of my having a hearing or crashing out, he says some friends of mine was upstairs now arranging bail. I knew he was lying, of course, because I didn't have no friends in K. C., I hadn't been there long enough. But you know how it is, a guy believes what he wants to believe, and for a while, I know it sounds funny, I halfway thought it was straight. But after a couple hours more I realized it was bologney, and then it was twice as bad as before.

Nothing happened until the next morning, Wednesday that was, and then they put me in the show-up. That was jake, of course, nothing to it, and of course there wasn't nobody put the finger on me for any other jobs. But after that there was another baseball game in that old back room. I was the ball, and believe me, them dicks knocked about a hundred home-runs. They was a different lot from the other mob, and they went over my alibi with a microscope. A microscope and a couple of pick-axes, I should say. I was out walking around all Sunday night, was I? Well, who did I meet could identify me, where'd I walk, where was some of them places I went looking for a job, and so on. I was in a tough spot and the way they asked them questions didn't help me to answer them. Take anybody under even ordinary conditions and ask him exactly what he done night before last, and see if he's got any prize answers on the tip of his tongue. Well, I suppose some of my remarks must've sounded funny as hell. And of course I didn't meet nobody, and I'd keep forgetting what streets I'd been on, although I'd put in my spare hours downstairs memorizing the route for a swell walking marathon. I'd laugh if anybody ever tried to ramble over them streets and boulevards I laid out, and do it in one night. It'd probably take a week straight on a bicycle.

But I didn't say nothing I didn't have to, and finally they'd simply beat the tar out of me until I couldn't of said nothing even if I tried. I wasn't more than half there by the time they was through with their setting-up exercises and I don't really remember the rest of it until I sort of come to late that afternoon, and I was back on the old homestead downstairs.

So that was all there was to it. I guess the wop must've changed his story or decided not to bother with it, or something. I guess the dicks finally realized they was on the wrong track, or maybe they still thought I pulled the job but they didn't have enough on me. Next morning, Thursday, I heard them keys rattling and the door opened and I thought here goes for another ten-round battle of the century. But the screw brought me over to another part of the basement, instead of upstairs.

"All right," he says, "get in there, you vag."

Holy Christ, it was the vag tank, and I hopped into it like it was paradise. That's what it looked like to me at the time. And a little later that morning they brought me upstairs and I got fined five bucks and they turned me loose. They let the other two fellows that was with me when they picked us up go, too. We

JANUARY, 1930



Woodman

Lithograph by A. Z. Kruse

JANUARY, 1930



Woodman

Lithograph by A. Z. Kruse

went outside, and it was snowing like hell, but it would've looked good to me if it was raining paving-blocks.

We went down the street and there was a couple of dicks waiting for us on the corner. It seems one of the fellows with me, a big guy, got real hard when they was sapping up on him, he must've kicked the dicks in the shins a couple of times, and they was anxious to polish him off some more. They invited all three of us out to the edge of town somewhere, if we thought we wasn't satisfied, or had a grudge, or something. But we told them to go peddle their papers somewhere else, and then they said they give us twelve hours to get out of town. If we was seen around K. C. after that, they said, we hadn't seen nothing compared to what would happen if they caught us then.

Well, these two fellows just grinned and started off for some place where they could get some junk and marijuana. But I had enough of K. C. so I went back to the hotel and checked out. I happened to have about a hundred fifty bucks left, with some new clothes I bought Monday morning, and I decided to go to Chi. All in all, I got out of that pretty lucky. I had a tooth knocked out, that was all. Of course I wouldn't of had even that if I could've used my real alibi, being with them three fellows, they was pals of mine, on Sunday night. But that would've got them into a sweet jam and I couldn't use it. And besides, I'd had a little trouble elsewhere, in Texas and California, and while I was in the can in K. C. I was all the time afraid they might find out about it and then it would've been good-bye, no matter how bum their rap was about the wop restaurant. So I was really pretty lucky, all in all.

Mine Funeral—Germany

By ED FALKOWSKI

Osterfeld—The colliery is in full blast. Shaftwheels turning, locomotives puffing up and down, pulling strings of cars. From the Kokerei spurt giant orange flames as the ovens are unlidded—which always happens before the coke is finally rammed out of the narrow oven by a huge mechanical arm.

The orchestra of production, under the baton of Big Demand, swings apace and all is merry at the mine.

But halt! Something queer about this! There's a band here—a real musical band, blowing sonorous instruments of brass which fling glints of hot sunlight into one's eyes. Hoarse, solemn music struggles toward one's ears through the hurlyburly of industrial sounds.

Looking around, one sees a large group of top-hatted and black-faced gentlemen standing with mummified faces, gazing at nothing. This group expands as others join it, wearing cylinders and formal frocks. Women swathed in deep black mingle in the crowd, and finally a hearse arrives, drawn by prancing gray horses.

It is a German mine-funeral. A Kumpel four days ago was caught under a fall of rock. His body was crushed into a jelly-like smear. They never bothered to take him home. Took him no further than the little cement chamber called the "body-room," and kept what was left of him there, until funeral arrangements could be made.

This is the funeral.

The generous company brings a great wreath which is carried by the tophats. It bears a wide black ribbon with gilded letters giving the company credit for its kindness . . . The box is soon carried out, and shoved into the hearse which begins its slow, solemn ride, preceded by the brass band bellowing doleful music.

Follows the limp black-robed widow, supported by her sons. Relatives, curious people, and friends join the procession which goes on foot. The bosses have asked the men from the section where the Kumpel was killed to "attend in full" . . . Many turn out in mourning regalia to follow the Kumpel on his last journey.

But the mine never pauses in its mighty performance. Whistles shrill, bells clang, bosses curse, workers wipe sweat off their brows and snap into it. Kokerei flames seem to leap higher than ever, and the whole jolly chant of production is audible everywhere. The music of sorrow loses itself in the swirl of mechanical noises.

NOW THAT SNOW IS FALLING

*O the sky shall crack with laughter
now that snow is falling
and all small timid things shall scent
frozen petals of white and feel
knifeblades of cold sink into
fur; yes, the bear shall suck
his toes, and ants will sleep.
If the sun coming slowly after
warms flies from frozen lethargy
to crawl again on window panes,
and you and I, hand in hand,
shall make tracks in the snow,
woolen gloves, and necks bound warmly
against knifeblades of cold, and we
shall say: O most surely is the snow
beautiful, and ask, what can we say,
now that snow is falling, and all
the world is white, and clean, and beautiful,
what can we say but that snow is beautiful
and cold tingles the sleepy blood
into new surging awareness—what can
we say if the sky is most suddenly rent
with laughter, trees crack with mirth,
and sparrows chatter in derision, as
a man walks by us clad thinly, shivering,
hungry, vainly searching for bread,
a job, and warm fires; what can we say,
if such a man passes us bowed against
the wind, and another, and yet more,
until he is as a multitude, a sad parade
of hungry, cold, vague faces. What can we
say, now that snow is falling?*

JOSEPH KALAR.

GOLIATH

*He towered like a cedar over men,
His red face told of outdoor days and nights,
His arms could throw a steer, a hundred fights
Had seen him victor. He could outwork ten.
Employers sought his services and when
A weakling crossed his path, the latter's rights
Were trampled on. "There are no earthly heights
"I cannot climb," he bragged time and again.*

*A buzz saw slipped one day. His legs of steel
Were cut like so much paper and he found
A wheel chair a poor means to move around.
His haughty individualism fled.
He came to know the underdogs and feel
Society owes all men joy and bread.*

WALTER SNOW.

WHO CARES A WHISKER

*who cares whether this
or that nice bit is prose
poetry freeverse etc.
so-and-so inclines to think
its this and that n no more*

*nice bits of stuff appear
nowanthen in the glut
no need to worry worry
what they are*

*who cares a whisker of jesus
when some nice kid smiles
all over kind of invitn*

*and o the clean blue bloom
an engineers blueprint beats
most art to hell with it
art art i mean*

SIDNEY HUNT.



Sidewalks of New York—Drawn by William Gropper



Gropper

Sidewalks of New York—Drawn by William Gropper

CLEAN SHEETS

(From a War Novel)

By CHARLES YALE HARRISON

We are out on rest now for the third time. We are in a little peasant village; a score or so of neglected, half-ruined houses and as many barns, pig-sties, sheds. The officers occupy the former. My section is quartered in a large barn with a gaping roof. Successive battalions have rested here and have used the planks of the roof as fuel. We continue the tradition. In the yard outside is a towering manure pile sodden with rich plant-nourishing steaming juices which we smell ever in our sleep. Each man has a pile of ancient, gray straw on which he makes his bed. It is so vermin-infested that if you stand and listen when it is quiet you can hear the scraping and scurrying of the pests underneath.

It is late afternoon, we are through with the day's fatigues and are sitting about digging mud off our boots, shining brass buttons, cleaning and oiling our rifles and killing lice in between times. We have long since learned that the term "rest" is another military expression meaning something altogether different than the idea conveyed by the word. Take artillery duel, for example: we are in the line—suddenly the enemy artillery begins to bombard us. We cower behind the sandbags trembling, white-faced, tight-lipped. Our own guns reply. They begin to hammer the enemy's front line. The infantrymen on both sides suffer, are killed, wounded. This is called an artillery "duel."

We are taken from the trenches and march for endless hours to billets. The first day out we really rest. Then begins an interminable routine of duties. We march, drill, shine buttons, do guard duty, serve as batmen for the officers, practice grenade-throwing, machine-gunnery and at night we are taken by lorry behind the lines to do wiring and trench-digging. This is called "out on rest."

Clarkson, our captain, doesn't make life any too pleasant for us. He is tall and blond and takes an insufferable pride in his uniform. He wears very light, smart buckskin riding breeches in and out of the trenches. His leather is brightly polished and his equipment gleams malignantly in contrast with our seedy, mud-stained uniforms. Yesterday he gave us a lecture on cleanliness and ordered us to shave every day. It gives greater morale, he said. How can you expect to kill a German when you feel like dying yourself? he asked. It is bitter cold and when we shaved this morning in icy water our faces were blue for hours afterwards.

* * *

Today Brownie came under Clarkson's displeasure. Wherever there is a stray bit of barbed wire, Brown is sure to be hooked on to it. His uniform is almost in tatters. The stuff is shoddy and comes apart easily. Before drill this morning Clarkson hauled him over the coals for being a disgrace to the company. Brownie stood erect and took the lacing without batting an eye. This infuriated White Breeches and he ordered his name taken for silent insolence.

Brown is now sitting on his pile of straw muttering imprecations at Clarkson.

"I'll kill the bastard—that's what I'll do. I'm just waiting until we get into a real scrap. I'll plug him between the shoulder blades."

We go on with our scraping and polishing. We are silent in the face of the torrent of oaths and complaints which stream from Brown.

After a while Broadbent, the lance-corporal, begins our favorite game. Between the cracking of lice he says:

"If you had a wish what would you wish for?"

Brown is the first wisher.

"I wish that bloody bastard Clarkson was dead."

"A lot of good that's gonna do you," says Fry. "That won't put beans in your belly."

"Just the same I'd give a month's pay to see him stretched out."

"Clean sheets," a voice says from a darkened corner of the barn.



Just two soft-boiled eggs.

Drawn by I. Klein.

It is Cleary. "Great big, white, cool sheets and no lice and I'm willing to let White Breeches live."

We all agree. We are filthy, our bodies are the color of the earth we have been living in these past months. We are alive with vermin and sit picking at ourselves like baboons. It is months since we have been out of our clothes. We begin to talk of the last time we slept between sheets. A flood of reminiscences begins. Brown forgets his hatred for Clarkson for the moment and rhapsodizes over his last night in a real bed.

Brown is a farmer's son. He comes from Prince Edward Island. He is tall, awkward and is continually stumbling into things, he does not grasp ideas quickly, not even the simple military ones, and this has made him the butt for the ridicule of his mates and an object of hatred for Clarkson. He is the same age as most of us, maybe a year or two older. He is the only married man in the section.

Two weeks before the battalion left Montreal a girl whom he knew back home came to the barracks and they got married. He obtained permission from the colonel to live outside. They took a furnished room somewhere and for two weeks Brown enjoyed complete and absolute married bliss. We know every little detail of that honeymoon. While waiting to entrain or lying in dugouts between fatigues Brown has gradually pieced together for us the brief few days of his married life. He starts to tell us again of his last night with Martha:

"The last night I slept between clean white sheets was with my wife. Oh, man!" He smiles in contemplation.

We urge him to tell us more. We know the story in all its minute details, but we have decided to joke with him. It is one of the many ways we can forget the war for a few moments. The joking is raw, a little cruel sometimes, and we know it, but we continue nevertheless.

We have heard every physical and emotional foible of Martha's. It seems as though we are all married to her. We know, as well as Brownie does, that she has a large mole on her right thigh near her hip; he has told us of all her reactions to his advances on the marital night. We enjoy these confidences like the *moujik* who when he could have no vodka preferred talking about it.

Anderson, the ex-lay preacher, is now with us. His wish is that the war would end, but this is against the rules of the game. The wish must be specific. He is ruled out.

"I wish I was home," says Brown. "Yes siree. Them was two swell weeks. Martha aint like those damned London tarts, all skin

NEW MASSES



Just two soft-boiled eggs.

Drawn by I. Klein.

and bones. When she was with a guy, . . ." Cleary teases him:

"Which guy?"

"Me," says Brown belligerently. This is his one point of honor in regard to Martha. He will not allow anyone to hint that she might be unfaithful or that she was not a virgin when he married her.

"I'm not saying she wasn't," says Fry, "but how do you know she was a virgin?" This is the hundredth time Fry has tormented Brown in this fashion and for the hundredth time Brown replies:

"She told me so."

Roars of laughter greet this inevitable remark.

The wishing is resumed. It begins in earnest when someone wishes for food.

Cleary speaks: "What's the use of wishing for weeks in bed. Why, Brownie, we haven't had a decent meal in months. I mean a meal. I'd give everything I own for a big helping of English roast beef, red inside and tapering off to a crisp brown outside—big brown baked potatoes split open on top and sprinkled with a little paprika—and a great hunk of Yorkshire pudding. Top that off with a bottle of cool ale." He sucks his saliva loudly and closes his eyes. After a while he adds: "And by roast beef I mean beef and not horses' meat—it's gotta be soft, juicy and red with a little blood oozing out of it."

"And to think," says Fry "of all the good meals I turned down in my life. Many's the time I passed up a big dish of brown beef stew with red carrots and yellow turnips floating in it just to run out and grab a ham sandwich in a restaurant. If I ever get out of this, I'll never refuse a thing my mother sets before me."

"What's the matter with a ham sandwich?" Broadbent asks.

"And to think that I once told the old lady that roast goose was too rich for me and turkey was too dry. I can see that goose now, stuffed with apples and chestnuts and little rivers of fat running down the sides."

It is Broadbent's turn:

"The best meal I ever had was when I got my five days leave in London. A tart took me to a place in Soho. Man, I put it away until I thought I would bust. You know, I think that soldiering makes your belly shrink—"

At this we lapse into silence. We are hungry. It is four o'clock and it is a full hour before we will get our hunk of gray war bread dipped in bacon grease and a mess-tin full of pale, unsweetened tea.

AS A DOCTOR SEES IT

By DR. B. LIBER

THE FIVE-THIRTY MORNING TRAIN

Summer.

Only workingmen—and a few women. I am probably the only exception.

All nationalities. Irishmen, easy to recognize by their characteristic faces and their special smile when talking. Italians—many—always happy. Some Negroes, tall, with naive features and deep, rich voices which I never tire to hear. Slavic faces—and two men reading a Russian paper. A Jew hiding himself to read his Yiddish one. Japanese and Hindus, heavy Germans. Spaniards with Jewish noses, or noses generally attributed to Jews. Even one American-Indian—rather short and stocky.

They go to their factories along the road. Some with tools and lunch packages. Many in their shirts and trousers only, no coats. Necks open. Sensibly undressed. Almost all, their clothes still soiled from yesterday's work. The dust on their shoes tells the tale of the dust in their lungs.

A group of three talk about how a certain new device throws out one man to each machine. Others are having fun about girls they have met. And so on.

I am dressed, or rather undressed, the same as they. Just a little cleaner.

All cars are smoking cars now.

One fellow is asleep and occupying four seats, but is not disturbed by those who have to stand up for lack of room. More kindness than I would expect.

At one station the train, which is almost a local and quite slow,

stops longer than usually. Impatient, some of the men go out to see. I too. And I understand. A railroad accident. A railway worker injured. I am trying to push away the crowd around him. I say:

"I am a physician."

But they all look surprised and one of them says:

"Go on! Stop that kidding!"

And another:

"He thinks it's a joke. It's no joke! Go and see his wife when they'll bring him home—his wife and kids! It'll be no joke for them!"

IN THE DEPTHS

The furnace man from the basement of the house in which my office was situated, was ill and came to see me. He was a colored man, but he was blacker than usual through coal and sweat.

He had fever and I advised him to leave his work and go home. But he could not do it, because there was nobody to replace him.

He was working seventeen hours daily, sleeping in the basement and had but one half day off once in two Sundays.

"I know what made me sick", he explained. "The boiler room is full of water. I guess it's backing up from somewhere and I had to stay with my feet in the water all day."

PLENTY OF ROOM

"It ain't as bad as all that. We've got lots of room. My boy he sleeps in the kitchen, where it's nice and warm. My husband an' me we sleep in the parlor. And the girl she sleeps in the bed room. Of course, the babies, you know, the three young ones, they sleep with us in the parlor. And my mother—you see, I have my old mother with me—she's got to sleep in the bedroom with Flora. And then we have the boarders."

"How many?"

"Only two. I got to have 'em or we couldn't pay the rent with somebody or other out of work all the time."

"Where do they sleep?"

"With the boy in the kitchen, naturally. The kitchen is the best room, you see. Airy 'n all that. The worst place is the bedroom. It's very small an' dark. No window. But quiet—no noise whatever. The girl's got to have it, she bein' in the noise all day long, in her department store."

"Well, how many people are you altogether?"

"Oh, gosh, enough!"

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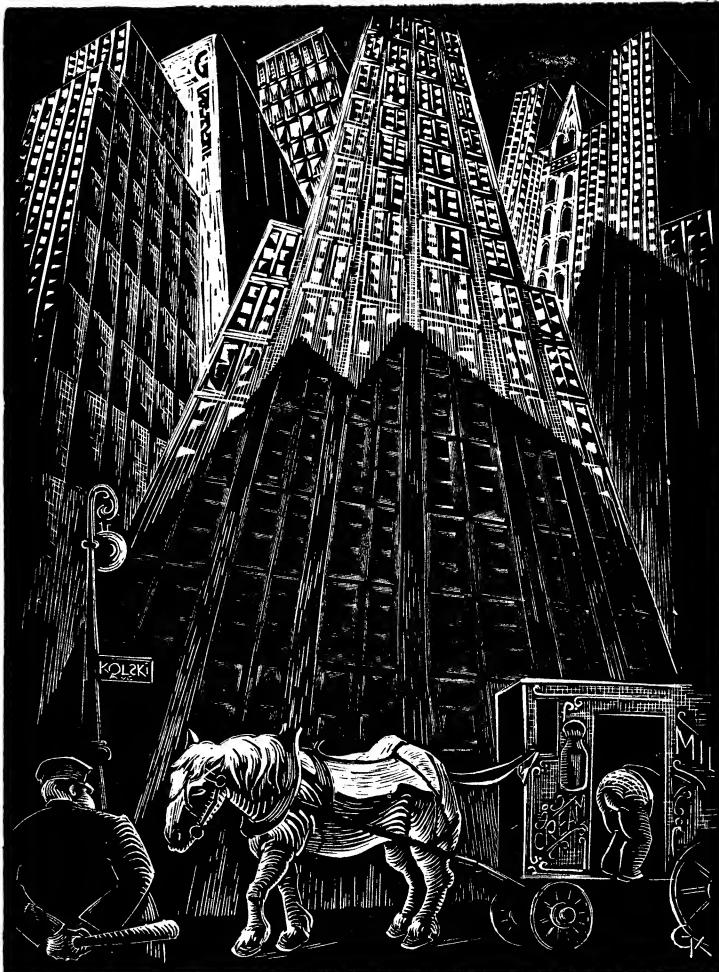


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Early Morning

Woodcut by Gan Kolski

THREE RUSSIAN FILMS

Conflict in the Caucasus. Goskino. Shown at the Film Guild Cinema.

This film has been simultaneously called here: *Caucasian Love*, *Love in the Caucasus*, and *Conflict in the Caucasus*. I have chosen the last as most descriptive of the subject-matter. The love motif is incidental. The major and insistent theme is the Cossack usurpation of the homes and lands of the pastoral folk of the Caucasus. Because of the trek, the film has been likened to the American documentary, *Grass*. A more illuminating comparison would be the romanticized films of American mass-migrations, like *The Covered Wagon* and *The Trail of '98*.

This Russian film is assuredly not a great one, but it is a compelling one. It records an actual historical occurrence and relates it through the lives of persons chosen as ethnologically representative. The individual and the document are a unit. In the American documentaries the momentous historical fact is diluted by the insistence upon a trivial narrative of single infinitesimal lives—falsified in the traditions of the movie. No sense of the human, social, economic significance of these immemorial adventures is borne by the American films. The Klondike gold rush is considered less important than a preposterous "western" narrative of a villain bent on rape. Comic relief is intruded to weaken the epic heroism and the larger, more permanent inferences of the trek for gold. The Russian film contains details which ordinarily would be banal. There is the death of the widow, with the ensuing dance, stirred by the courageous patriarch, to thwart the wild grief. This is not a novel device in either theatre or cinema. But it is sustained and justified, even transfigured, by the total intention of the film, as expressed in the movement and in the theme, and becomes an expression of social optimism. Georgia too has found hope! Significant it is, indeed, that he who provokes the dance

MOVIES AND THE THEATRE

HARRY ALAN POTAMKIN • EMJO BASSHE
CARL HAESSLER

against grief is the old patriarch. Youth is not a fact of age, youth—the symbol of courage and hope—is spirit and intelligence. As yet the Russian film has made no fetish of youth, and that is a sign of maturity. Maturity, profundity and the new energies released account for the excellence of the Russian kino. These positive forces will, I am sure, turn back the adulations that tend toward a cult of the Russian film. The Soviet Cinema grows in variety and sensitivity.

The New Babylon. Sovkino. Cameo Theatre.

And as the Soviet Cinema grows it comes to new problems and develops new viewpoints. *The New Babylon*, a film upon the Paris Commune, seeks "the temperament of the Paris Commune." I have said "seek" because I find that the particular attitude is too much one of caricature and the treatment too much the sketch to impart the "temperament." The historical statement is over-reduced. The tonal qualities are on the surface. I do not object to the instructions the graphic arts may give the cinema. The motion picture has sources in the entire experience of mankind. But what I desire is that the film, as yet, shall seek profounder instructions than satisfaction with tones.

Yet I cannot withhold my admiration of the consistency of the attitude and the tonal qualities. There is variety in the attitude and in the pictorial continuity. The latter draws upon different mediums and upon the impressionist painters: Manet, Degas . . . and the arch-sentimentalist Carriere. Indeed, it is amazing how the latter's paintings, seen always through a mist, become a portion of the film and lose their sugar-sweetness. No previous film has quite approached *The New Babylon* in the richness of tones, the blackest of blacks, and the arrangements of blacks with grays and whites. I have never seen such filming of black against black! This alone, considered as a new tentative in the Russian kino, illustrates the esthetic poise that must be evolving in the U.S.S.R. German and American studio-lighting become amateurish and drab.

The intention of the film was evidently to satirize the gross super-refinements of the Paris of that era, and incidentally to refer the satire to the same evidence prevailing today. Criticism, with sympathy, is dealt the vacillating artist-leaders of the Commune. There is a logic that cannot be denied here, but its total effect is of an heroic picnic. Sophistication can produce a form of stylized acting, as it has done well here; it may, unexamined by depth, produce an over-simplification which is close to falsehood. Too much is omitted. The picture might have been made after following Jean Renoir's film of Zola's *Nana*. The performance of the soubrette is much like Catherine Hessling as the sexual slut, but I — against all condemnations of the latter—find her performance more structurally firm and intensive. The problems and their tangents provoked by *The New Babylon* could fill a book. That is contribution enough. I urge everyone to examine this detaining film for himself.

HARRY ALAN POTAMKIN.

A visit To Soviet Russia. St. Mark's Theatre. Distributed thru the Film Dept. W.I.R.

Usually travelogue begins by telling some pretty tales about the "quaint" history of the people, their customs and habits and shows us some costumes—with people in them—the oldest man or woman, crooked streets with a mountain as a background and finishes up with a fade out. Four people applaud and you wait for the "feature." But this travelogue starts out by showing you a lot of poorly dressed people representing most of the countries of the world arriving at a Soviet port—Leningrad—which does not need much of an introduction—that is if you haven't been asleep for the last twelve years. It tells you that these people

*Early Morning*

Woodcut by Gan Kolski



Early Morning

Woodcut by Gan Kolski

BOOKS

REVIEWED BY:

V. F. Calverton
E. Merrill Root

H. J. Greenwool
Helen Black

Ralph Cheyney
Joseph Kalar

The Drift of Civilization. A symposium. Simon & Schuster. \$3.00.

The *Drift of Civilization* is appropriately named. If ever a book has appeared that has shown that civilization is adrift this does—and in no indefinite fashion. As a symposium it is a complete failure. Its whole spirit is one of sick evasion. There is scarcely a writer in the volume who is interested in civilization. Perhaps Gorki, Nexo, and Russell might be cited as exceptions. The rest are interested in the particular fields of work in which they are occupied and are scarcely more concerned about the destiny of civilization than they are about the future of Egyptian ethics. Of course, every writer in the symposium employs the word civilization as a frequent reference, but in almost all such instances the word has only an intellectual connotation. Never is there an understanding of civilization in terms of the masses and their emancipation. Civilization is conceived of as an intellectual problem, vital only in the philosophic sense of the word. In other words, civilization which is a social product, and can be considered only in terms of social structure, is subjected to nothing more than individualistic analysis. Twenty six men of distinguished reputation ramble on in an undistinguished way upon various themes that should have great meaning to our civilization.

It is hard to describe what a profound disappointment this volume really is. Here are gathered some of the most brilliant minds of our day. Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell, Benedetto Croce, Guglielmo Ferrero, Maxim Gorki, J. B. S. Haldane, H. C. Wells, and yet the best they can do is to pad together a few pages of unimportant observation. Einstein's essay, in its consideration of causality and the attitude of modern physics toward the whole problem, is perhaps the most striking in the volume. At least it says something that is important, and says it with clearness and conviction. Bertrand Russell's comments on Science and Education are intelligent but too scantly developed to be significant. Croce writes a meaningless and childish attack on the subversive influence of historical materialism upon modern thought. H. G. Wells sinks almost into stupidity in his observations upon The Next Phase in America. Keyserling and Siegfried in their respective attempts to discuss the Key to America's Spiritual Progress and The American Age are guilty of the most trifling essays in the symposium. No—there is one exception. Stephen Leacock's comments on the Future of American Humor is without doubt the worst piece of piffle that has appeared in any book in years. James Harvey Robinson in his essay on the Age of Surprises is nothing more than sentimentally repetitive, and after reading Morris Fishbein's empty words on Medicine of the Future one can readily understand how hopeless the average doctor-mind is in the face of social forces and factors.

If civilization has a future it is not to be discovered in the words of these men. Here is chaos, not vision. However prophetic many of the authors are in these days, their prophecies have little about them that is social in content. At best they think, but they do not feel. Suffering means nothing to them—and as an aspect of civilization it is for them only an exterior form. The only writers in the entire symposium that have any vision of civilization beyond that of material and intellectual advance are Maxim Gorki and Martin Anderson Nexo. Gorki's essay is translated in such atrocious English that whatever poetic insight and social vision it no doubt intrinsically possessed is rendered awkward by its style. Even at that, however, Gorki's words do convey something of the future spirit of civilization—or of social life beyond civilization—that the other contributors, with the exception of Nexo never conceive. (It is curious and

revealing to note that in the biographical notes Gorki is erroneously said to "oppose" Bolshevism). Nexo is the only writer in the volume to indicate something of the direction of civilization, and to point out the inevitable decay of individualism as the new civilization emerges.

Perhaps the fact that an American newspaper, the *St. Louis Dispatch*, was the original source of these essays has much to do with the silly superficiality that characterizes the volume as a whole. The essays were called forth in celebration of The Fiftieth Anniversary number of the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. Such no doubt is a vivid indication of the nature of newspaper progress—under our civilization.

V. F. CALVERTON.

Babbitt Set Free

Destroying Victor, by Carleton Beals. The Macaulay Co. \$2.50.

Literature at the present moment of social incoherence consists largely of a medley of tangled screams. The wild speaking-with-tongues and the literary table-rappings of a Gertrude Stein; the sublimated nightmares of transition; the genius of James Joyce like a bloody and distorted sun seen thru the psychological mist of an idiot's dream, the poetry of Robinson Jeffers as of some lesser Aeschylus with shell shock, writing of Brobdignagians in anguish who worship the pathologically admired genitals of a red horse: these are the most characteristic and the most acclaimed expressions of the human mind today. They prove, partly by their own power, but much more by the naive easy acceptance which we give them, that altho we do not have the desperate courage to take Housman's advice and "Put the pistol to our head," our sickness has certainly "Become our soul."

Such things are, perhaps, even in their failures, literature: for they express the dominant mind of humanity today—or at least the mind of a dominant class. They are not, however, great literature or even good literature, for the mind that they express is warped, silly, pathological, romantic: to the ages of health that will yet come, and to the creative classes that will yet become dominant, these will be only curious freakish records of psychological perverts. Such literature is simply the interesting chrysalis stage of society in a moment of transition, great in what it portends, petty in what it is.

We have had enough of such literature today—which is proved by the fact that today the great creators of literary nightmares have already arrived and even passed, and that the stage is being taken by their little fantastic imitators and corrupters, whom we may call the Little Boy Blues of literature.

Destroying Victor is a queer, unsatisfying, yet encouraging contribution to this fantasia of tangled screams.

It deals with Henry P. Scroggin, who is illuminating as a type and nauseous as an individual. He is our national paradox—a volcano of lowbrow energy hidden under a highbrow frost of frail ideas and chill morality. He is a queer union of Irving Babbitt and George F. Babbitt—of delicate fastidious ideas without flesh, and crude protoplasmic flesh without vision or creative intelligence. His sad relations with his albino wife, his pathological crusades for morality, his fierce and easy fall into the delights of illicit love, his bewildered blundering into tragedy and the shadow of crime, his experiments with poverty and his careerist's exploitation of Socialism, his protoplasmic ferocities of ardor and drab

love with women of the streets, his rise on his dead selves to higher things (such as a church pew and a huge bank account), his rekindled return to his wife who has renewed her youth like the flapper, his final (accidental) freedom from the obsession of the book he has been unsuccessfully trying to write all his life—these are the plaintive numbers and the sad soiled shoddy of his life. And yet we feel in him, in spite of all, something potentially fine and great. There are moments when he seems about to break loose not to some ignoble health and crafty freedom thru more vital and intelligent adjustment, but to some creative synthesis. And then, after the flame of great love and the purging shadow of death, he becomes—a sort of degraded Napoleon of minor finance! Thus we rise from the book as from the contemplation of some crudely powerful human saurian finding psychological adjustments amid the slime.

The philosophy of the book is—a curious emancipated surrender to the drift-philosophy of the age. Don't complain about Babbitt, whether Irving or George, a la Mencken: sophisticate him equally out of the chill frost of morality and the burning suns of creative vision; set free his energies and passions for their own sakes (the most healthy folly to which we have yet attained); let him make money and take life as his oyster; let him see life with candid irony yet use it to the full with protoplasmic ardor. This is, to be sure, an advance beyond Tweedledee Babbitt and Tweedle-dum Mencken, but a mere broader adjustment to the drift of things is a sad goal for a free spirit. Better, if that be all, join Robinson Jeffers in his clamor for the eraser of the Ice Age!

Fortunately, however, this is not the Dancing Star to which the chaos of the age will give birth—it is a mere transient bon-fire, warm and pleasant, by which to eat and drink and sleep. But beyond all such adjustments lie creative synthesis, and the transvaluation of values, and the ardent spirits who long for "the lightnings and great deeds."

E. MERRILL ROOT.

Double-Minus Zero

Last Nights of Paris, by Phillippe Soupalt, Macaulay Co. \$2.50.

I expected a good story from this French writer, who has been sentimentally described by blurbists as a member or ex-member of the dada-ist and surrealist groups who nevertheless or necessarily therefore retains an enviable amount of individuality in technique and viewpoint. However that be, and I must admit that such descriptions usually fascinate me no end, I felt myself left at the end of this book without even the smell of a good story. And that is just a terrible shame, I think. Because when a writer sets out to draw a picture of Paris, and the Paris of the underworld at that, and *by night!*—well, I expect something for my money.

But the materials used are beyond the author's grasp. Crooks, pimps, exquisitely simple whores move in an atmosphere of cigarette-smoke and fog at dawn over impervious pavements, and there are isolated descriptions of nocturnal isolation that rival, somehow, similar things of Boris Pilnyak's; but as a novel, *Last Nights of Paris* just does not register. It is the old symbolist army game: nothing is created but symbols out of which minus nothing is created in turn. The result being double-minus zero.

HERMAN SPECTOR.

be still, by William Closson Emory. Lotus Press. \$3.00.

A sheaf of poems for staunch Republicans of the Word to rail at, and a sheaf of poems to delight the ear attuned to quiet irony and the singing word. The title poem, *be still*, I hold to be one of the few really fine poems of the past five years, comparable to Cummings at his best. Emory's lyrics are slight though interesting, it is in the freer rhythms of "be still" and "Theme for a Blues Song" that he gets into his stride. Some of these poems are merely poems that would get published in *Poetry*. They add nothing to the volume. *be still* is a very small volume on which to judge a poet, but as it is, it reveals a fine, rebellious, ironic mind, still a bit fond of the Baudlerian word and the gaudy image, but never fat.

JOSEPH KALAR.

DEBATE

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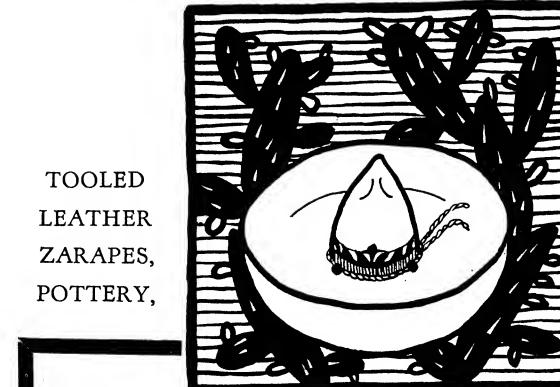


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GOD CALLS IT A DAY

By H. J. GREENWOOL

Religion Lends a Hand, by James Myers. Harper Bros. \$1.50.

There is a growing feeling among decent people that God was not really the author of the Bible. It is even ventured by exponents of the higher criticism that the book is the world's first and greatest collection of holy ghost writing. In that case the old gentleman should not be held accountable for the barbarities, vulgarities and obscenities of that shameless shocker. At the same time he loses credit for such finer sensibilities, such loyalties and such advanced sentiments as can be sifted from it. Like the narratives of the world series in baseball, like the transoceanic airplane autobiographies and like the speeches and books of Secretary of Labor James J. Davis, holy writ is without doubt the excellent output of some hardworking, harddrinking publicity hound whose wits were under hire to the best bidder.

Nevertheless the Old Boy started something in the literary world and in other fields as well. No self respecting reader would be caught paging the tons and tons of ecclesiastical drivel set in motion by that best seller. He either laughs it off or holds his nose. But now and then a religious book manages to get published that supremely exhibits all the sickening qualities of the species. It simply cannot be overlooked. It cries for criticism, not so much higher as lower. As ultimate in that line I submit a recent work by the Reverend James Myers, patronizingly entitled *Religion Lends a Hand*. Whatever his Maker did or did not scribble in the beginning, the Reverend all too evidently has no alibi for his own authorship. This atrocity in its yellow jacket is plainly of his own ineffable begetting. Having seen him in action, having heard from better than divine authority of his performance when I was not unlucky enough to be present, I would swear upon my mortal soul that the Rev. Jimmie had done it all with his own little portable.

Radicals normally have better things to do than to cast even a swift contemptuous glance at Myers' muck. But its 152 pages so neatly compress the insufferable snobbery of the sacerdotal lend-a-handers; it so bulges with holy smugness directed at the workers; it so reeks with the sweat of self-satisfaction on the author's consecrated brow, that it is the definitive distillation of the sky pilot meddling in mundane affairs.

A look at the book is possibly worth while just to black in the picture of the fatuous parson sweetly lending a delicately manicured hand when he ought to be swiftly receiving the spiked boot. The citations below, not by any means forced, but simply culled from chapter to chapter as they fly like cinders into the eye of the reader, scarcely need comment.

One of twelve chapters is the story of social results achieved by parish mergers. It is inoffensive enough on the whole and in fact not specially discouraging. But it seems that, though writing in June of the year of his lord 1929, Myers had never been told and had never read a line about the Siamese twinship of religion and sex. Learned anthropologists had written in vain of the sexual significance of the church steeple. Gutter atheists had jeered without avail about the cleft in the bishop's miter. Jimmie remained serenely pure and undefiled. Only in the blackest blindness to everyday religious psychology could he have written (I omit the unfortunate dame's name):

"After the death of her husband, left with a family of five young children, Mrs. . . . passed through a deep religious experience of the love of Christ. She wanted something to do for him . . . She asked for a hard job."

Could anybody write like that unless his mind were perfectly virgin to modern knowledge? Mary Ware Dennett ought to impart to Jimmie, in a clean and wholesome manner, some of the Facts of Life.

But let the book speak for itself. Here are quotations:

"As one looked over the splendid audience of colored and white people, seated in the pews in perfect equality (in Toledo), one was impressed anew with the artificiality of the barriers which have kept us apart. Some would have said that this thing could

not be done. Yet there we were, on a basis of perfect decorum and self-respect."—Page 35.

The razor parties and rapings the apprehensive James was nervously looking for evidently didn't come off.

On a slumming trip to Communist headquarters the dominie became disgusted because nobody among his pilgrims was bright enough to refute the invited Communist speaker. His Christian benevolence seems to stop short of the Communist threshold. In this he falls in step with his boss, the Rev. Worth Tippy, who denounced Communists to the American Federation of Labor convention in Toronto as "worse than wild beasts," in the same address in which he unctuously stated that the church fights nobody. This while the mill owners in the south were firing strikers out of the church, using the preachers whose salaries they paid as their tools.

This may seem a long and ponderous review of a worthless book. But it is useful every now and then to take a minister by the pants, turn him upside down and find the employers' money falling out of his pockets. The church pretends to be on both sides. When the pinch comes it lines up with its paymaster. The few exceptions are as scarce as generals in the casualty lists of the last capitalist war.

You read the pitiful list of achievements mustered by Myers in this book and yet God, through his vicar, calls it a day. The boy has an odious nasal trick of intoning a scriptural phrase every so often in his chapters. A slumming trip through the bible specially conducted for this review yielded the following from I Kings to pin on the church:

"And at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say: Why hath the Lord done thus unto this land, and to this house?"

And Jimmie's village banker won't be Johnny-on-the-Spot to belch Amen!

Love and Revolution

A Great Love, by Alexandra Kollontay. Vanguard Press. \$2.50.

A Great Love might well be classified with the post-war books headed 'Now it can be told'; only in this instance it is 'Now it can be discussed'. During the pre-revolutionary days, Alexandra Kollontay and her comrades wrote on political and economic subjects. Love, personal relationships, were unimportant. Revolutionaries had other problems to think about. 'Love' could be settled—or would settle itself—after the revolution had been accomplished.

When Kollontay's first book, *Red Love*, was published, many people snickered. Why should a revolutionary leader concern herself with love? And the answering question is why not? It is really something that interests workers, and few there are who can write of it with the sincerity and keen psychological insight of Kollontay.

The volume *A Great Love*—(and here's hoping the publishers may think up some less hackneyed and cheapening title for her next book)—is composed of three parts: a short novelette bearing the book's title; and two stories "Sisters," and "The Loves of Three Generations." The novelette is a story of Ssemjon and Natasha, two workers in the revolutionary party before the revolution. Ssemjon is one of the party's foremost writers and research workers; Natasha is also a writer of pamphlets and articles, and an active leader. She has for years admired Ssemjon's work; when she meets him, her admiration is increased. She loves him as a helpful comrade, and becomes a frequent visitor in his home. Then he makes her aware of his overwhelming passion for her. His is a great love, something greater than he has ever felt for any woman, because to her strong physical attraction, Natasha adds an exceptional mind.—But of course he cannot hurt his wife



Drawn by Jan Matulka.

Anjuta. She is so dependent on him, so devoted to him. He must protect her. She is not self-reliant as Natasha is.

So thruout months and years of intimacy, they resort to constant secrecy; repeated humiliations and inconveniences for Natasha, but always the frantic shielding of Anjuta to save her pain. Ssemjon, who in revolutionary problems is a great thinker, shows himself increasingly selfish, obtuse, insensitive, demanding. He wants Natasha to adjust to his whims without question: to forget that she is a woman of intelligence, with her own work to do; to be the traditional female whose sole desire is to please; to be present when wanted and cheerfully out of the way when not wanted.

Gradually Ssemjon kills Natasha's love. She cannot tell him so. Repeated efforts have showed her it is impossible to make him understand her point of view on anything. So she treats him gently like a child, kisses him good-bye and goes off knowing she will never return. The story is told with skill, and deep understanding of human emotions. It is in essence the love story of every man and woman who are intellectual equals.

"Sisters" is told more objectively, as tho it had been related to Kollontay and had not developed out her own experience. In the early post-revolutionary days, a young worker is sent on a trip with some Nep men. He begins to drink; and as his work brings him more and more into contact with these traders, he becomes an habitual drunkard. He turns away from his wife, who had been his beloved companion thru the October days, and finally one night brings a prostitute to his own home. In the morning the unsuspecting wife discovers the prostitute, and the girl is equally startled to find that the man has a wife. The two women adjourn to the kitchen to prepare breakfast and discuss their problems, with sympathy and understanding. The wife reluctantly sees the girl leave, feeling as tho she were a relative or an old friend. Who knows when circumstances may bring her to the same fate!

This story carries conviction, but it is unsatisfactory because it gives no insight into the man's behavior. Why did a tried revolutionary fighter disintegrate so completely. You crave some psychological explanation of such a character.

The third story "The Loves of Three Generations" will doubtless be of greatest interest to most readers. Here is the problem in two previous generations. Comrade Olga's mother had outraged her parents and friends by leaving her husband to live with the man she loved. Comrade Olga in turn shocked and puzzled this same adventurous mother by insisting on her right to be in love with two men at the same time. Comrade Olga was from young womanhood a worker in the revolutionary movement, and she continued to be a valuable and beloved worker after her revolution had been established. But in spite of revolutionary training and her own love experiences, she is hysterical and sick when her own daughter Genia spends a night with Olga's young husband. Genia is not in love with him. She is not in love with anyone. She is too busy to be in love. And she cannot understand why under the sun her mother is so upset. What difference does it make that she slept with Andrei? She won't do it again if it hurts her mother; for she loves her mother more than anyone. But why should her mother make such a fuss, be so hurt, feel that she had been betrayed? It is all too puzzling for Young Comrade Genia. She does not understand such love. She will never love

in that way, she feels sure. "How can one work, if one loses one's self like that?"

And in answer to this, Alexandra Kollontay closes her book with the question: "Will the future show that the new class, the new youth with its new experiences and its new conceptions and feelings, is on the road to true happiness?"

HELEN BLACK.

Brilliant Red

Bow of Burning Gold. by E. Merrill Root. Robert Packard and Company. \$2.00.

There are a very few today who are neither bleating for the advertising media nor babbling for *Blues*, *transition* and their ilk.

In the forefront of those who are true enough poets to be also prophets and good enough prophets to be revolutionists stands E. Merrill Root, whose sparkling *Bow of Burning Gold* is a fine weapon in the arsenal of revolt. True, it is not proletarian; it is almost as full of literary allusions—chiefly to myths and fairy tales—as the work of one of the hosts of literary snobs. Careful craftsmen must wince at many of the rhythms and more of the rhymes. But Root's work is brilliantly a brilliant red.

To find such scintillating imagery as Root's you must go back to the Elizabethans. The vigor, humor, yea-saying zest of phrase and thought that crackles in *Noah* and many other poems should make them endure when whole *American Caravans* of egocentric verse have been long forgotten. Magnificent diatribes against the murder of Sacco and Vanzetti and other crimes of American Capitalism, rhapsodies in honor of the proletariat, emotional realizations of machines and the glory they will usher in when workers master them fill a good part of the book, making it a work of social as well as literary significance.

It is only a real poet who would call factories, "those Minotaurs that feed on anthracite for ebon grain (and on Man's agonies)," an electric light bulb, "Niagara within a bubble," who would state, "We harpoon earth till oil leaps out like subterranean whales that spout" and would cram his lines with a multitude of even more brilliant images.

RALPH CHEYNEY.

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Drawn by Jan Matulka.

WORKERS' ART

A drawing by Wm. Gropper of a scene from "Naftoli Botwin" produced in New York by Artef (Jewish Workers Theatrical Alliance). The cast is composed entirely of workers. The play was directed by Emjo Basshe. It has drawn enthusiastic audiences and continues 3 performances weekly (Saturday, Sunday, Monday) for 10 weeks at the American Laboratory Theatre in New York.

A department for workers' cultural activities. Send in reports and photos of theatrical groups, singing societies, workers clubs, sports clubs, film groups, camera groups and any field of workers cultural activities.



WORKERS SINGING SOCIETY

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The Federal Workingmen's Singing Society is one of the oldest workers' organizations of its type in America. It was founded in 1904 with a statement of purpose that it has retained consistently—"For the promotion of workers' culture and the aid of workers' struggles . . ."

At present we have an attendance of approximately 150 at our meetings which we hold once a month at the Hungarian Workers' Home in New York.

We have a chorus of 56 which performs at our weekly *Song Hours* as well as at various radical gatherings, picnics, etc.

Although the Society is not a political organization, it is not without a defined political outlook since it is definitely committed to the policy of the Third International.

Comradely yours,

EUGENE TOTH, Corresponding Sec'y.

New York, N. Y.

ALL-AMERICAN PHOTO EXHIBIT

Editor New Masses:—

The first All-American exhibition of photographs dealing with the life of the workers in the United States, Mexico, Canada, Central and South America will be held in New York City in February 1930 by the Workers Camera League under the Auspices of the Department of Cultural Activities of the Workers International Relief.

The Workers Camera Club is particularly interested in photographs of industrial and farm life, natural scenes, workers homes, labor sports, machines, engines and pictures of individual workers at their tasks. The exhibitor may submit as many pictures as he wishes but only three will be finally chosen from each individual for the exhibition.

The pictures must not be smaller than 4x5 nor larger than 8x10 inches. In order to achieve uniformity it is preferred that all pictures should be mounted on black cardboard. There will be no entrance fee and members as well as non members may exhibit.

but exhibitors are asked to enclose enough postage to insure the return of those pictures in excess of the number accepted. Ten prizes will be awarded for the ten best pictures. The prize pictures and others chosen will be reproduced in all the leading workers newspapers and magazines.

The names of the judges will be announced two weeks before the exhibition opens.

For information write to the Workers Camera League, Room 512, 949 Broadway, New York City.

TINA MODOTTI EXHIBIT

An exhibition of photographs by Tina Modotti, whose work has often appeared in the *New Masses* has been held at the University of Mexico from December 3 to December 14. Simply and beautifully she has made a documentary record of working class life in Mexico—at work, at play, their poverty, the hovels they live in. The exhibition has attracted a great deal of attention, winning additional recognition for this gifted worker-photographer.

For years Tina Modotti, has continued her work under the greatest difficulties, the lot of every proletarian artist. Within the last few years, however, her photos have appeared in leading publications in this country and in Europe and have won her international recognition. Her photographs have appeared in *Monde* in France, *A. I. Z.* in Germany, in many Russian publications, and in *Creative Art*, *Labor Defender*, *New Masses*, *Daily Worker* and many other publications in this country.

Writing of her work she says: "I am a photographer, nothing more. I am anxious to make honest photographs without affectation and 'artistic effects' or in imitation of other mediums of graphic expression."

The camera is a product of our mechanized civilization. I use it as a tool and a most satisfactory medium to portray the life we are living."

More of her photos will be seen in coming issues of the *New Masses*, Meanwhile arrangements are being made to show a greater part of her work at the coming All-American Photo Exhibit to be staged in New York City in February under the auspices of the Workers Camera League.

WORKERS' ART

A drawing by Wm. Gropper of a scene from "Naftoli Botwin" produced in New York by Artef (Jewish Workers Theatrical Alliance). The cast is composed entirely of workers. The play was directed by Emjo Basshe. It has drawn enthusiastic audiences and continues 3 performances weekly (Saturday, Sunday, Monday) for 10 weeks at the American Laboratory Theatre in New York.



A department for workers' cultural activities. Send in reports and photos of theatrical groups, singing societies, workers clubs, sports clubs, film groups, camera groups and any field of workers cultural activities.

A NEW PROGRAM FOR WRITERS

The John Reed Club was organized about two months ago here in New York. It is a small group of writers, artists, sculptors, musicians and dancers of revolutionary tendencies.

It takes time for any group to develop unity and purpose. Our problems so far have been mainly how to raise the rent for the clubrooms and how to get furniture. Some of the painters and writers got together one night and built a lot of tables and chairs. Bill Gropper, Klein, Refregier and others whitewashed the walls. Other work has been done. Soon the place will look like a clubroom instead of an Ellis Island flophouse.

Several activities have begun. The artists arranged an exhibit at the Workers' Co-operative House in the Bronx. About 35 pictures were hung. The exhibit will be shown for about 4 weeks. Over 300 workers came to the opening. There was a furious discussion, led by Lozowick, Basshe, Gropper, Klein and others. The workers razed the still-lifes, nudes and several other pieces of stale academicism hung by several of the painters. The workers liked the strong modern stuff. The talking ended at one in the morning.

There have also been pre-views of new films at the club and movie discussion. Other activities of club members: Harold Hickerson has organized a music school with 100 pupils at the Co-operative Apartments; Gropper and Lozowick have a class in the graphic arts with about 30 members; Edith Siegel is training a worker's ballet for the Lenin Memorial pageant. Em Jo Basshe is directing the Jewish Workers' Theatre plays; other members are lecturing at the Workers' School.

There will be a big Red Art Night in the Labor Temple on December 28th, run by the club, with a fine varied program. Red poets, novelists, playwrights, will read from their work; several critics will talk, there will be a new movie from Soviet Russia, a ballet of Negro and white workers, a play by a group of Japanese proletarian artists, and satirical songs by Horace Gregory, illustrated in the sentimental manner with lantern slides by Gropper. It looks like a good night. The workers' International Relief is working with us on this affair.

The literary members are getting busy. There have been several meetings to discuss practical plans for work. At the next meeting I shall propose the following:

That every writer in the group attach himself to one of the industries. That he spend the next few years in and out of this industry, studying it from every angle, making himself an expert in it, so that when he writes of it he will write like an insider, not like a bourgeois intellectual observer.

He will help on the publicity in strikes, etc. He will have his roots in something real. He will specialize because it is a source of strength. The old Fabians used to get together and write essays based on the books they had read. We will get closer to the realities.

It is possible to create a national corps of writers, each of whom knows one industry thoroughly. There is already a basis for this. Ed Falkowski has been a miner since childhood, born of miner parents. He can write well. Martin Russak has the same background in the textile industry, and is a writer of real quality. H. H. Lewis is a farmer, close to the problems of the dirt farmers of the middle west. Joe Kalar has been a lumber worker for years. There are others.

It may be possible in the near future, if all these writers become fully conscious of their unique mission in the modern world, that we may put the *New Masses* on an industrial basis.

Instead of having a board of contributing editors made up of those vague, rootless people known as writers, we will have a staff of industrial correspondents, whose function will be to report each month, in prose, poetry, plays and satire, what is happening in each part of industrial America.

This would make the magazine functional, and give its readers something real to chew over. It would help the writers, too, by damming their energies into one sharp swift channel of experience. Any industry can furnish enough themes to any writer for a lifetime.

If this can be done, it will be something new—something that has

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never before happened in the history of writing. It is not an imitation of Zola. He was a great pioneer, but he was always the tourist. We must become more than that, part of the industrial life itself, the tongue of the working class.

I hope this can be done. It is quite practical and quite exciting. We would like to hear from Kalar, Lewis and other writers on this program.

MICHAEL GOLD.

LETTERS FROM READERS

OK on Upton Sinclair

Dear Michael Gold:

I was particularly struck with your reply to the letter of S. Resluth, both for its fairness and common sense.

If Resluth desires any red converts from the 100 million and more in the U.S.A. who have never seen a line written except in the press which is completely capitalistic, how will he get them except by such books as *Oil?*

Haven't seen \$1.50 for months, but enclose 15c for January *New Masses* and more power to your elbow and your horse sense.

Yours,

H. FRANCIS GRAHAME.
San Francisco, Calif.

Not So Good

Dear Masses:

In the December issue, Michael Gold dashes to the defense of Upton Sinclair, against a carping correspondent. Now, just what are you going to do, as the correspondent asks, with us carpers? For Mike's defense of himself and Sinclair does not dispose of us at all. And it doesn't dispose of Sinclair either.

Personally, I have a recurring sense of worry over Mike, for fear we may lose him in some attractive bog.

I never worry over Sinclair, because I know well we shall lose him.

Of course Mike admires him—we all do—but once his enormous sentimental following was led by this plausible piper into the shambles of a capitalist war.

Will he lead them with the same jaunty sincerity—for I actually believe him to be sincere!—into the counter-revolution? I only ask.

San Jose, Calif. ANNA PORTER.

A Little Better

Dear New Masses:

I wish to congratulate you on recent progress. Especially in your last issue you show a new grip on your problems. Anyway, here's the opinion of a constituency of one:

The cover of the December issue is attractive. In this issue too, the drawings have punch. Your comfortable bourgeois who unwarily laughs at them is likely to find himself laughing on the wrong side of the face. Gropper, Klein, Kolski, Matulka and Lozowick are serving with distinction (but the latter, who is a magician, fell down in *Barge Dwellers' Sunday*.) Art Young's *It's Hell* is a whole essay on Capitalism.

I have the feeling that your artists consider their *Masses* work their first love; I do not have that feeling about all your writers. I do not question their sincerity or enthusiasm; I question their attitude toward their work. I do hold that the writer, once he has formulated his ideas, must pull himself up and assume the same careful ob-

jectivity that the artist uses in strengthening his lines. Scott Nearing, Upton Sinclair and Carlo Tresca have this virtue; most of the others haven't. The result is that their work is smudged with maudlinity, with babblings and inane exclamation points. I am tired of seeing excellent material like *Two Cities* marred by this persistent subjectivity. It happened that I had an experience almost identical with that of Herman Spector's. His article grabbed me and threw me . . . then sent me sliding down a gentle incline to land in a bewildered sense of anticlimax.

Michael Gold is a special case. I want to go on record with this: he has an eye to essentials and a poet's sanity-in-inconsistency that are very rare. He has guts. His weakness is that he often spouts and over-dramatizes. I am inclined to forgive him this, as a necessary result of his vigor.

By the way; when did Dos Passos die? He had a review in the December issue—or was it ghost-writing?

The book reviews are your weakest feature. They are often enormously unfair, passing off a superficial, literary conviction for real criticism from a worker's viewpoint.

Your poetry—well, I realize the difficulties. It is improving. Kamimura's piece is a gem.

ERWIN VOLLMER.

Long Island, N. Y.



Gan Kolski—is a Polish artist now living in New York. He is 29 years old, has lived in France and Germany. His work is shown at a number of museums and can be seen at the Weyhe and Downtown galleries and the Delphic Studios in New York City. He has contributed to the *Forum*, *Plain Talk* and other publications.

His work has been included in the *Fifty Best Prints* of last year. A number of his woodcuts have appeared in recent issues of *New Masses* of which he is a contributing editor. He is now at work on a series of lithographs.

IN THIS ISSUE

Theodor Scheel—who has drawn the cover for this issue, makes his first appearance in the *New Masses*. He is a young artist from St. Louis, now living in New York. He has appeared in the *Bookman*, *N. Y. Eve. Post*, *N. Y. Eve. World* and other publications.

John Dos Passos—author of the well known *Three Soldiers*, contributes to this issue parts of his new novel *The 42nd Parallel* which will appear early in February. He is now in Germany to witness a production of his play *Airways, Inc.* shown in New York last winter.

Hugo Gellert—whose work often appeared in the *Masses*, has been a contributing editor to the *New Masses* since the first issue. He is secretary of the Anti-Horthy League.

Kenneth Fearing—now living in New York, is author of the recent book of poems *Angel Arms*. He has contributed stories, poems and reviews to many of the leading publications.

H. J. Greenwool—is a contributor to the *American Mercury* and other publications.

E. Merrill Root—is author of *Bow of Burning Gold* just published. He lives in Indiana.

Ralph Cheyney—of Chicago, is editor of *Contemporary Verse* and co-editor with Jack Conroy of the recently published *Rebel Poets Anthology* for 1929.

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Insecticide Needed

Monterey is hideous with fish canneries along its water front and exploited Mexican workers squatting on the hills behind. Pacific Grove, started by Methodists, is mawkish, its architecture and atmosphere Bryanesque, Chatauquan. Pebble Beach is modern. Here successful exploiters try to see who can build the showiest places. To date, one Crocker seems to have the prize for a bizarre structure of stone and marble with patios, fountains, pillars, porticos, cloisters, arches, archicolations, buttresses both flying and standing, bath rooms which are the wonder of the pictorial section of the Sunday supplement, all surrounded by a massive stone wall that neither shuts in nor shuts out anything, not even a cow or a single chicken.

Then Carmel. Oh, Carmelbythesea! Here live the vermin-like parasites of the Parasites. Little, unprincipled people, playing at life. Their architecture is a nightmare. Take the business district. Trinket shops, "togggeries", "kiddie shops," Cinderella shops, women's sport clothes shops, Grona-Grona tea rooms and Realtors carry on in a crazy lot of little buildings which try to look like English cottages, Mexican adobe ranch houses, Spanish peasant homes, Alhambra courts. With Turkish, Moorish, Persian even, palatial, peasant, medieval. All new and flimsy and cheap. At a little distance it gives the impression of Coney Island. Close up, it is like a merry-go-round.

This is Carmel. Its inhabitants? Unknown writers whose thought is centered on selling their stuff. Daubers of meaningless little canvasses endlessly reproducing the rocky coast, the wind-blown cypresses, and the gnarled old oaks, also for sale. Middle-aged women who try to make the selling of useless trumpery and inflated real-estate an art by means of paint, rugs, old furniture, and pieces of brass. Gentle-voiced male apostles of modern music who give morning lecture recitals to female seekers after culture who don't know the difference between a major triad and a saxophone. Bridge instructors who live also by their winnings. And amateur weavers, amateur makers of art jewelry. Everything amateur and imitated, nothing serious, nothing indigenous. (With the exception of a very serious interest in golf, bridge, and the price of stocks.)

Monterey needs a healthy workers movement, Pacific Grove a tidal wave, Pebble Beach dynamite, but for Carmel a good dose of insecticide will do the work.

San Francisco, Calif.

R. WALSH.

From a Sailor in Jail

New Masses:

"Stone walls do not a prison make, or iron bars a cage" is all right for poets and other kindred spirits, but in the language of my cell-mate, I find it's a lot of "baloney." The nervous fastness of stick and stone, the

clanking of bars, the rasping voices of keepers and the hunted unsocial, selfish appearance of one's fellow inmates—all have a depressing effect, indeed.

My cell-mate, an Hungarian, in for some marital squabble with his loving spouse, has nearly driven me to distraction. All last night he recounted the exploits of a compatriot, who was eight feet tall and could make his mustachios fast behind his head. Every morning he tells me of the virtues of his good wife, "a nice, fine, big lady 225 pounds" (he himself is 5 feet high and about 100 pounds in weight.) Towards nightfall, however, his better half becomes, in his muttering, a harlot and other terms in street parlance, concerning which Kraft-Ebbing wrote a tome. When your letter came he was soliciting my aid in computing Jesus' age in minutes, if he were alive today.

One thinks of such abstractions as sunshine, stars and the buoyant effect of being alone on the lookout in tropic seas. Ever, and anon one thinks of that ephemeral undefinable hunger blanketed as "love." One runs the mental, fantastical gamut of pondering on comparative "liberty." Well, Ed, I suppose that stew will be burning now and rather than cause a culinary catastrophe by this vapid scribbling I will cut it short. Offer up a few prayers for that human sunk in the sea of sin and degradation. Warn all the youth, not to be so sure about this so-called "freedom."

Baltimore, Md. JACK McALLISTER.

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John Dos Passos.

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Michael Gold.

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Joseph Kalar.

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